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JOHN HEYWOOD,

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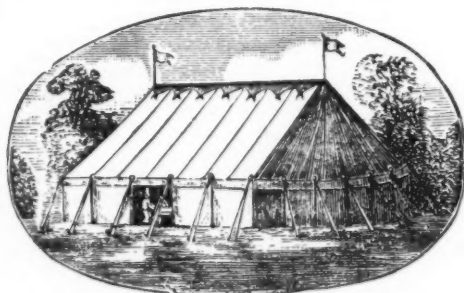
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EARLY SPRING—ROSTHERNE MERE.

From a Water-Colour Drawing by W. Noel Johnson.



IN PRAISE OF CHARLES LAMB.

BY JOHN MORTIMER.

ONCE upon a time the present writer essayed to address a small but select audience on the subject of Charles Lamb, with the view of holding up that humourist to the admiration of the persons there assembled. When, by the aid of biographical details, illustrations, and comments, the essayist thought he might have accomplished the purpose in hand, he was a little taken aback by one of his hearers rising in his place, and declaring frankly that, for his part, he could not see much in the author who had been the object of such laudation, at the same time more than hinting that he considered him a very much over-rated person. The incident reminded one how Charles Lamb himself tells of a Scotchman he met who assured him that he did not see much in Shakespeare, regarding which expression of opinion the humourist says, "I replied, 'I dare say not.' He felt the equivoque, looked awkward and reddish, but soon returned to the attack by saying he thought Burns was as good as Shakespeare. I said that I had no doubt he was—to a *Scotchman*. "After which," Lamb says, "we exchanged no more words that day." Now when a man, otherwise intelligent and capable of expressing a

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critical opinion, tells you he does not see much in Charles Lamb, though the confession—revealing as it does the existence of a mind in which the quality we call humour finds no response—may surprise you, it is not one to provoke either scorn or contempt. As Lamb himself says in "John Woodvil" of such a case:—"Heaven gives gifts and withholds them. It has been pleased to bestow upon me a nimble invention to the manufacture of a jest, and upon thee an indifferent bad capacity to understand my meaning." It is altogether a matter of idiosyncrasy. The sense of humour, as we know, is a characteristic of the highest intelligence, even giving a rounded completeness to such, but, on the other hand, there have been very high intelligences indeed in which that quality was either deficient or absent. Moreover there are minds to whom, for one reason or another, the province of humorous literature is an unexplored region. I had an odd illustration of this the other day. While I was engaged in examining the shelves of an old book shop there entered a thoughtful looking young man, who enquired for a work of a religious or theological kind, some "Lives of the Fathers," if I remember rightly. The bookseller was in a position to supply the required work, and while the bargain was being arranged, the young man took up a book lying there on the counter and proceeded to turn over the pages with some curiosity. It was a copy of "Tristram Shandy," and evidently new to him, for he proceeded in a very innocent and ingenuous manner to question the bookseller as to its scope and purpose, enquiring, among other things, whether it was a novel and what the price might be. My friend did not seem very communicative in the matter, but evasive rather, and contented himself by saying that it was a novel, and he wanted eighteenpence for it. The young man, after dallying with the book for a time,

like one who is in doubt about a venture, decided not to add the Rev. Laurence Sterne's book to "The Lives of the Fathers." When he had gone my friend informed me that he was a student in a local theological college, and when I asked why there was so much reticence regarding Parson Yorick—whose sermons, by the way, are not much in request at this time by students in divinity—he confessed that he was withheld, by a feeling of delicacy, from introducing the reverend humourist to such a grave and serious mind, where he might possibly prove to be a disturbing influence. While this little incident was in process of enactment, my eye, in roaming over the shelves, fell upon a copy of Carlyle's "Early Life," and I was reminded that there was in Mr. Froude's book a remarkable expression of opinion regarding Charles Lamb, by one who not only knew what humour was, but considered it to be "the characteristic of the highest order of mind." Carlyle had been to Enfield, and met with Charles Lamb there in one of the later years of his life. The impression produced is expressed in this wise:—"Heigh ho! Charles Lamb I sincerely believe to be in some considerable degree insane. A more pitiful, rickety, gasping, staggering Tomfool I do not know. He is witty by denying truisms and abjuring good manners. His speech wriggles hither and thither, with an incessant painful fluctuation, not an opinion in it, or a fact, or a phrase that you can thank him for—more like a convulsive fit than a natural systole and diastole. Besides, he is now a confirmed, shameless drunkard; *asks* vehemently for gin and water in strangers' houses, tipples till he is utterly mad, and is only not thrown out of doors because he is too much despised for taking such trouble with him. Poor Lamb! Poor England; when such a despicable abortion is named genius!" Froude tells us that Carlyle did

not know, when he wrote this, of the tragedy of Lamb's life—a statement which reads strangely—but is bound to say also that forty years afterwards, when the knowledge must have been acquired, there is no reversion of the judgment. Without straining this matter needlessly, one may still say that, in view of the true facts of the case, and having in mind the inimitable "*Essays of Elia*," rather than this sweeping, scornful, contemptuous condemnation, more fitting does it seem to some of us it would have been, if the Sage of Chelsea had added another chapter to his list of Heroes, and given us "*The Hero as Humourist*," with Charles Lamb as the typical representative. Charles Lamb in his cups might be a sorry sight for Carlyle, and so, also, doubtless, would Robert Burns have been, who, nevertheless, figures as a Hero among Men of Letters. One of the finest verses ever penned by the Scottish poet was to this effect:—

To make a happy fireside-clime
To weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.

In the light of this definition of the sublime and pathetic in life, how stands it with Charles Lamb? We, who know the whole story—and Carlyle must have known it too—know that in that rickety, stammering tomfool, as he has been called, there is recognisable, apart from his foibles and frailties, the embodiment of the most lofty self-renunciation. "*To make a happy fireside-clime*," not "*for weans and wife*,"—for that felicitous possibility was unflinchingly set aside—but for a poor, stricken sister, the chief actress in a domestic tragedy which had darkened the past of both their lives, and cast over both of them the hearth-haunting gloom of imminent or impending madness, constantly threatening her; and under such

calamitous conditions to deal with life humorously, blending laughter with the tears of it; this is what Charles Lamb set himself heroically to do, with such results as we are aware of. Was ever humour evolved from conditions that seemed more adverse to it? Comparisons are proverbially undesirable, but Carlyle has, at least, provoked one which is unfavourable to himself. Those who knew the philosopher best tell us that he was "gey ill to live with," and from other sources we know that the sharer of his fireside did not always dwell in the happiest clime.

There is an entry in Carlyle's journal, immediately preceding this reference to Charles Lamb, which is suggestive. The philosopher was in one of his deeply speculative moods, and he asks, "Where is to-morrow resident even now? Somewhere or somehow it *is*, doubt not of that. On the common theory thou may'st think thyself into madness on this question." Omar Khayyam, the astronomer poet of Persia, who had a certain vein of humour in his constitution, says, in his "Rhubaiyat":—

Oh, my beloved, fill the cup that clears
To-day of past regrets and future fears;
To-morrow! why, to-morrow I may be
Myself with yesterday's seven thousand years.

Now it must be confessed with a due degree of sadness and regret that the humourists have frequently shown a disposition to act on the suggestion of the Oriental bard. Even the great and good Joseph Addison, as Thackeray says, citing the authority of Lord Macaulay, had a certain weakness for wine. But, says the later humorist, though he was sometimes to be met with in his cups, and though his hand might shake a little in the morning, as he penned some of his memorable letters, "A better and more Christian man scarcely ever breathed than Joseph Addison.

If he had not that little weakness for wine, why we could scarcely have found a fault with him, and could not have liked him as we do." Honest Dick Steele was another and perhaps a more notorious offender in this direction, and is said to have been "deep in debt and drink" when he penned that devotional work, "The Christian Hero," yet he is held by some to have been a gentle soul, and full of human kindness. Poor Goldsmith too was given to an undue dalliance with the bottle, which the more sober-minded Dr. Johnson found it necessary to put aside when discussing with him the way out of pecuniary embarrassments by means of the "Vicar of Wakefield."

But enough of this. Let us now, if you please, proceed to the closer consideration of our subject. The student of English literature who is of a methodical turn of mind will have no difficulty in separating the humourists from the vast multitude of authors whose works crowd the shelves of his library. When they have been got together it will be found that these men of humour form a very motley and numerous company, possessing one quality in common, but differing widely in expression. If they are to be classified they will be found to consist of poets, playwrights, novelists, and essayists. At least one of them—Goldsmith to wit—presents himself to us in all these literary capacities. They are called humourists because they possess a certain power of dealing playfully with the phenomena of life—this power being differentiated illimitably according to the whims, conceits, eccentricities, fancy, or imagination of the individual. The humorist's primary purpose is to amuse you, to provoke a laugh or a smile, as the case may be: it is this disposition in your nature to which he appeals. All good humour must be mirth-provoking in some degree, but as it deals with the emotions its effects are sometimes anything but gay. In

"the collation of the great with the little in the presence of the infinite," as Coleridge puts it, the humourist sometimes sounds the depth of human feeling. His power of influencing you in this way will depend upon the depth of his own nature. The humourists have given us the good wine of literature; but there is a difference in the flavour and quality according to the vintage. The finest humour is that which springs from, and appeals to, the spirits which are touched to the finest issues. The true humourist must have a certain gravity in his composition; he is often, indeed, a very melancholy man, with the added capacity, so to speak, of being able to smile at his own grief. The anatomist of melancholy, "that fantastic, great old man," Burton, was himself a humourist. Cowper, the victim of melancholia, had a vein of humour in his otherwise deeply serious nature, and you remember it has been said of him:

O men, this man in brotherhood,
Your weary path beguiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you peace,
And died while ye were smiling.

The humourist is, from the necessity of the case, more or less of an egotist. Montaigne was a most delightful egotist, always talking of himself; so, among others, were Addison, Steele, and Goldsmith. You cannot separate the personality of any one of these authors from his work. Their talk is of themselves; they touch you on the human side, and so it comes about that the literature of the humourists is the literature of humanity, something which has to do with your loves, and hopes, and fears. And so, in consequence, your true humourist often gains for himself the affection of his readers, admiration not being limited to the work done, but assuming a distinctly personal form, and passing into love for its author.

No writer of his kind has enlisted the personal regard of his readers more than Charles Lamb, because no one has more distinctly blended his personality with his work. In his *Essays* and his letters he writes mainly from the personal point of view, though it belonged to his humour often wilfully to mislead and exaggerate, for he had a mind predisposed to fictions. One evidence of this personal attachment and familiarity is to be found in the often-noted fact that he is rarely spoken of without the use of his Christian name. He is not Lamb or Mr. Lamb, but Charles Lamb. It was in such a way his friends spoke of him in his lifetime, and, as an instance of the love indicated by this familiar form of address, he tells us feelingly that one of his dearest friends, Norris, the sub-treasurer of the Temple, always spoke of him as Charley. When he is alluded to as Elia, there is generally prefaced to it the word "gentle." Coleridge wrote of him as "the gentle-hearted Charles," but this he resented with strong expostulations, for no man was more sensitively modest regarding himself. "For God's sake," he says to the poet, "(I never was more serious) don't make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print, or do it in better verses. It did well enough five years ago, when I came to see you, and was moral coxcomb enough at the time you wrote the lines to feed upon such epithets; but besides that, the meaning of 'gentle' is equivocal at best, and almost always means poor-spirited. The very quality of gentleness is abhorrent to such vile trumpetings." That he should be spoken of by his Christian name he did not object, for, so he said, Christians should address one another.

And now, at this stage of his essay when, after dallying perhaps a little too long with preliminaries—in which his readers will have detected the bias of his sympathies and

a certain tendency to hero worship—it becomes necessary to give a reason for the faith that is in him, the present writer finds himself confronted with a troublesome question of procedure. He cannot but assume that many of his readers are as familiar as he is himself with the author under consideration. And yet if he would endeavour to define, in however vague and ineffectual a manner, the charm which Charles Lamb has for him, it is impossible to dispense with certain illustrations, especially of a biographical kind, which are common property. It may be possible, however, to avoid wearisomeness or offence, by dealing with these things as we would do in recalling the features, the walk, and the conversation of a mutual friend.

Among humourists Charles Lamb ranks with the essayists, and in order of time succeeds that other notable essayist, Goldsmith, who had not been long dead, when, within a short distance of his grave, and within the Temple precincts, the later humourist was born. Mary Lamb may have seen Goldsmith, and Charles had touch with him in a way through his schoolmistress, who knew the poet, and used to say that he had once lent her his poems to read. No more fitting cradle than the Temple precincts could have been found for such a nature and temperament as that of the child Elia. Very lovingly, in after years, did he describe the scene of his birth. In his essay on "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple" he says, "I was born and passed the first seven years of my life in the Temple. Its churches, its halls, its gardens, its fountains, . . . these are my oldest recollections." How delightfully he dwells upon the antique features of this haunt of ancient peace, with its magnificent, ample squares, its classic, green recesses, existing as a kind of central peace at the heart of the endless agitation of London, thankful that his childhood had such surroundings, and expressing the

belief that a man would give something to be born in such a place! What exquisite pictures, touched with the most delicate hand, and blended with the sweetest humour, does he give us of the place and its inhabitants, those quaint benchers who walked the terrace there, and among them Samuel Salt and his faithful servitor, Lovel, in whom we are to recognise the portrait of his own father! But even in the earliest pages of such autobiographical reminiscences as he has given to us in his Essays we are made aware by his own confession of one of the peculiarities of his humour—that disposition to blend fact with fancy, so that it becomes difficult to separate the one from the other. "Let no one," he warns us, "receive the narratives of Elia for true records! They are, indeed, but shadows of fact—verisimilitudes, not verities—or sitting but upon the remote edges and outskirts of history." Of this predisposition of his mind to fiction he says, in a letter to his friend Bernard Barton, "Is it a fatality in me that everything I touch turns into a lie? I once quoted two lines from a translation of Dante which Hazlitt greatly admired and quoted in a book as proof of the stupendous power of that poet; but no such lines are to be found in the translation, which has been searched for the purpose. I must have dreamed them, for I am quite certain I did not forge them willingly. What a misfortune to have a lying memory!" In his essay on "New Year's Eve" he falls into the penitential mood regarding this weakness of his humorist nature.

"If I know aught of myself," he says, "no one whose mind is introspective—and mine is painfully so—can have less respect for his present identity than I have for the man Elia. I know him to be light, and vain, and humoursome; a notorious . . . , addicted to . . . ; averse from counsel, neither taking it nor offering it,— . . . besides; a stammering buffoon; what

you will; lay it on and spare not; I subscribe to it all, and much more than thou canst be willing to lay at his door; but for the child Elia—that ‘other me,’ there in the background—I must take leave to cherish the remembrance of that young master—with as little reference, I protest, to this stupid changeling of five-and-forty as if it had been a child of some other house, and not of my parents. . . . I know how it shrank from any, the least colour of falsehood—God help thee, Elia, how art thou changed! Thou art sophisticated. I know how honest, how courageous (for a weakling it was), how religious, how imaginative, how hopeful! From what have I not fallen, if the child I remember was indeed myself, and not some dissembling guardian, presenting a false identity, to give the rule to my unpractised steps, and regulate the tone of my moral being!”

Of the child Elia we know that he was born into a comparatively poor household, with the gloomy inheritance of a tendency to insanity for the offspring of the parents. Of the sorrows of that domestic circle, and the tragedy that was enacted there, we have no mention in the *Essays*, but instead we have glimpses or more enlarged pictures of the early and later life and surroundings of the narrator, some of them pathetic and others of a more joyous nature, but in which the lights and shadows are blended with an inimitable grace of style, the charm of which is more easily felt than defined. In “*Witches and other Night Fears*,” he tells us what a nervous child’s terrors were, but pleasanter it is to think of him, however, in the more congenial and happier conditions of a free rover along with his sister in the library of old Samuel Salt the Bencher, “tumbled early by accident or design into that spacious closet of good old English reading without much selection or prohibition, to browse at will upon a fair and wholesome pasturage.” Then with what an undying charm he has invested the Christ’s Hospital of his school days, rendering pious acknowledgments to its founder, “that godly and royal child

King Edward the Sixth, . . . the boy patron of boys, the serious and holy child who walked with Cranmer and Ridley." What an air of romance he has thrown about those two cherished places, the schoolhouse and the Temple where he was born! For his own part, the present writer remembers how once arriving in London in the early hours of the morning of a summer's day he wended his way to Christ's Hospital, and there watched the lads—fantastically dressed in the garb of a bygone time—busy at their play, and thought how Charles Lamb and Coleridge had once been noticeable figures in such a crowd, and how, leaving this scene, he betook himself to the Temple gardens, there to loiter in that sweet enclosure made more beautiful by the tender grace of Elia's literary associations. But one cannot so loiter in following the path of Charles Lamb's life, but must pass over it rapidly, stopping only to indicate a few of the most noticeable features and incidents of the way. As a change from the cloistered influences of the Temple and the school, there came pleasant country visits, afterwards to be reproduced in such essays as "Mackery End" and "Blakesmoor in Hertfordshire." Here, again, were influences that worked strongly upon a nature which drew more than half its inspiration from bygone things. You will, of course, be familiar with that great old house of Blakesmoor, whose custodian was his grandmother Field. In this old house, with its tapestried chambers, its carved chimney-pieces and old portrait-gallery, the boy Elia found ample food for his childish imagination, and one of the most charming pictures he has left us is of a cheerful store-room, "in whose hot window-seat," as he says, "I used to sit and read Cowley, with the grass-plot before, and the hum and flappings of that one solitary wasp that ever haunted it about me—it is in mine ears now, as oft as summer returns."

Then, when the schooldays were ended, and he finds himself a junior clerk in "the old South-Sea House," where his elder brother John occupied a more important position, he transfers us in his narrative from the half-deserted mansion to a half-deserted emporium of trade, where we still find ourselves in the shadow of a grave antiquity. You remember, of course, that inimitable essay on this same South-Sea House, which is not only an example of Elia's best style, but also fitly illustrates the retrospective quality of his genius, and the power of catching the spirit of a scene, and of reflecting it with all its subtle influences.

From the South-Sea House Charles Lamb passed to the India House, where he was destined to remain to the end of his business days. At this point the youth Elia passes from our view, and we enter upon a new phase of his existence. And here it becomes fitting to say that if we would understand Charles Lamb completely we must acquaint ourselves, not only with the "Essays of Elia," but with his correspondence. Though he was a remorseless destroyer of letters, his have been preserved for us in a comparatively voluminous form, and no more charming collection is to be found in the whole range of epistolary literature. For some of us they divide the interest with the Essays, possessing, as they do, the power of bringing us into more intimate, every-day touch with the writer. When Carlyle made the entry in his journal from which an extract has been given, he complains regarding Lamb and his friends that he could not find out how it really stood with them. If he would have known "how it really stood" with our author these letters would have informed him. There we have Elia as he really lived, without disguise or affectation. Though he betrays much of the same exaggerative humour and playful misleading fancy as

in the *Essays*, he is, nevertheless, perfectly frank regarding himself, writing down his imperfections and foibles, not as parading them, but in the spirit of one who has nothing to hide from his friends, and who only honestly wishes them to know him for what he really is. These letters enable us to read between the lines of the "*Essays of Elia*."

This correspondence commenced when Charles Lamb had been four years at the India House, and in the early epistles we have the brief agonising letter in which he informs Coleridge of the tragic fact that in a fit of insanity Mary Lamb had been the cause of her mother's death. How Charles Lamb took up the burden of his life consequent upon this mental weakness of his sister's has already been more than once referred to, and in the face of so fully-known facts it is unnecessary to say more than that he bore that burden lovingly and devotedly to the end of his life. There is no nobler instance of self-devotion in all the lives of literary men, and in the light of it one can understand why Thackeray always spoke of him as "Saint Charles." Under conditions that were enough to take all the light and laughter out of life, while displaying the deepest sense of the sorrow and seriousness of it, he was not only courageous but delightfully playful and humorous. In his correspondence you find the saddest epistles followed by the cheeriest ones, as the rays of hopeful light break in upon the gloom. As an illustration of what that life of dual loneliness was at times, take the following letter to Coleridge, the solitary instance, as Canon Ainger points out, in which patience and hopefulness seem for a moment to be failing him. He says:—

"My dear Coleridge,—I don't know why I write, except for the propensity which misery has to tell her griefs. Hetty (an old servant) died on Friday night,

about eleven o'clock, after eight days' illness. Mary, in consequence of fatigue and anxiety, is fallen ill again, and I was obliged to remove her yesterday. I am left alone in a house with nothing but Hetty's dead body to keep me company. To-morrow I bury her, and then I shall be quite alone, with nothing but a cat to remind me that the house has been full of living beings like myself. My heart is quite sunk, and I don't know where to look for relief. Mary will get better again, but her constantly being liable to such relapses is dreadful, nor is it the least of our evils that her case and all our story is so well known around us. We are in a manner *marked*. Excuse my troubling you, but I have nobody by me to speak to me. I slept out last night, not being able to endure the change and the stillness, but I did not sleep well, and I must come back to my own bed. I am going to get a friend to come and be with me to-morrow. I am completely shipwrecked. My head is quite bad. I almost wish that Mary were dead. God bless you."

Then, almost immediately following this, we come upon an epistle to Manning, in which he proposes to discuss this question of moral feeling—"In what cases, and how far, sincerity is a virtue?" and regarding some differences of religious opinion, he says:—

"I begin to think you atheists not quite so tall a species! Coleridge enquires after you pretty often. I wish to be the Pandar to bring you together again once before I die. When we die, you and I must part; the sheep, you know, take the right-hand sign-post, and the goats the left. Stript of its allegory, you must know the sheep are—I, the Apostles, and the Martyrs, and the Popes, and Bishop Taylor and Bishop Horsley and Coleridge, etc., etc. The goats are the atheists, . . . and dumb dogs, and Godwin and M—g and that Thyeſtæan crew! Egad, how my saintship sickens at the idea! . . . God bless you, Manning. Take my trifling as *trifling*; and believe me, seriously and deeply, your well-wisher and friend."

In electing to cleave only to his sister, thereby making manifest the purest of all earthly love, we know that

Charles Lamb put away from him a love of another kind, abandoning all hope that might have sprung from his affection for Alice, the fair-haired maid "with eyes of watchet hue." In view of this self-abnegation, what a pathetic interest belongs to that essay on "Dream Children." In "Old China," where Charles Lamb introduces his sister under the name of Bridget Elia, we get an insight into the manner of that life of "dual loneliness" of their early struggles in days of straitened means, which they talk over as they sip their tea from a new purchase of old blue china. Says Bridget—"I wish the good old times would come again, when we were not quite so rich: I do not mean that I want to be poor, but there was a middle state,' so she was pleased to ramble on, 'in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and O! how much I had to do to get you to consent in those times!); we were used to debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* or *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon; that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.'" Then follows the well-known story of the purchase of the "Beaumont and Fletcher" folio; of the self-denial that went to it, and the humourously-pathetic reflections incident thereto. In the same essay there are reminiscences of their cheap country rambles, and of the delightful evenings they spent at the play, crowded together in the shilling gallery.

They had many migrations in their lives within a limited area in and about London, these two marked people, sometimes changing their residence under painful circumstances, and only for a short period of their lives did they

possess a self-contained home; for the rest it was but removal from one lodging to another, until that final one for him—Edmonton: of these removals we have some humorous descriptions by Charles Lamb, who really disliked change. When, some place more sheltered from public notice than their Pentonville lodging being necessary, they removed to Mitre Court, in the much-loved Temple precincts, we find a letter addressed to Manning, in which Lamb says:—"When you come to see me, mount to the top of the stairs—I hope you are not asthmatical—and come in flannel, for 'tis pure airy up there. And bring your glass and I will show you the Surrey hills. My bed faces the river, so as by perking up on my haunches and supporting my carcase with my elbows, without much wrying of my neck, I can see the white sails glide by at the bottom of the King's Bench Walk, as I lie in my bed." From here, at a later date, they moved to Inner Temple Lane, where he hoped to stay until his death, so much did he hate moving. In another letter to Manning, announcing a change of address he says:—

"What a dislocation of comfort is comprised in that one word 'moving!' Such a heap of little nasty things, after you think all is got into the cart; old dredging boxes, worn-out brushes, gallipots, vials, things that it is impossible the most necessitous person can ever want; but which the women, who preside on these occasions, will not leave behind if it was to save your soul. They keep the cart ten minutes to stow in dirty pipes and broken matches, to show their economy. Then you can find nothing you want for many days after you get into your new lodgings. You must comb your hair with your fingers, wash your hands without soap, go about in dirty gaiters. Were I Diogenes I would not move out of a kilderkin into a hogsheed, though the first had nothing but small beer in it and the second reeked claret. Our place of final destination, I don't mean the grave, but No. 4, Inner Temple Lane—looks out upon a gloomy, church-yard-like court,

called Hare Court, with three trees and a pump in it. Do you know it? I was born near it, and used to drink at that pump when I was a Rechabite of six years old."

Then there was that other removal, to Russell Street, Covent Garden, of which he says:—

"We are in the individual spot I like best in all the great city. The theatres, with all their noises; Covent Garden, dearer to me than any gardens of Alcinous; where we are morally sure of the earliest peas and 'sparagus. Bow Street, where the thieves are examined, within a few yards of us. Mary had not been here more than four-and-twenty hours before she saw a thief. She sits at the window working, and casually throwing out her eyes, she sees a concourse of people coming this way, with a constable to conduct the solemnity. These little incidents agreeably diversify a female life."

Among such scenes and surroundings the gentle Elia lived his life, nailed to the desk's dead wood at the India House in the daytime, but with the leisure of his days devoted to literature and the society of friends. To some of us similarly occupied, it is pleasant to think that one of the choicest of our humourists was a clerk, a votary of the desk, "one that sucks his sustenance, as certain sick people do, through a quill." He was familiar with indigoes, cottons, raw silks, and piece goods, but, as he says, "the disfranchised quill that had plodded all the morning among the cart-rucks of figures and ciphers, frisked and curvetted at its ease over the flowery ground of a midnight dissertation." Of his life at the India House we get a good deal of knowledge in his letters. He fretted and fumed at times regarding the monotony, drudgery, and restraint of his work. To Wordsworth he says: "My theory is to enjoy life, but my practice is against it. I grow sincerely tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not yet subdued to the yoke. . . . I sit like Philomel all day (but not singing)

with my breast against this thorn of a desk, with the only hope that some pulmonary affection may relieve me." But it was a wise provision that Charles Lamb was placed at the India House, and, despite his fretting and fuming, he knew it, and was ready to admit it; conscious, as he says, that while there was cash at Leadenhall there was corn in Egypt. It suited his humour sometimes to fret and fume, but when his young Quaker friend, Bernard Barton, displays the same irritable dissatisfaction at his clerk's life in a banking-house, and expresses a desire to break away and become an author, it is quite another matter. Says Charles Lamb to him:—

"Throw yourself on the world without any rational plan of support beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you!!! Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock slap-dash, headlong, upon iron spikes. If you had but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the booksellers. . . . Keep to your bank and the bank will keep you. . . . I bless every star that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leadenhall. Sit down, good B. B., in the banking office. . . . Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment, look upon them as lovers' quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome, dead timber of a desk, that makes me live. A little grumbling is a wholesome medicine for the spleen; but in my inner heart do I approve and embrace this our close but unharassing way of life. I am quite serious."

There you have the sound common sense of the man. The India House, too, was not without its humours to relieve the monotony of an accountant's life. In a letter to Manning he describes an incident there in this fashion:—

"The East India House has been thrown into a quandary by the strange phenomenon of poor Tommy Bye, whom I have known man and madman twenty-

seven years, he being older here than myself by nine years and more. He was always a pleasant, gossiping, half-headed, muzzy, dozing, dreaming, walk-about, inoffensive chap, a little too fond of the creature (who isn't at times?), but Tommy had not brains enough to work off an overnight's surfeit by ten o'clock next morning, and, unfortunately, in he wandered the other morning, drunk with last night's superfetation of drink taken in since he set out from bed. He came staggering in under his double burthen, like trees in Java, bearing at once blossoms, fruit, and fallen fruit, as I have heard you or some other traveller tell, with his face literally as blue as the bluest firmament; some wretched calico that he had mopped his poor oozy front with had rendered up its native dye, and the devil a bit would he consent to wash it, but swore it was characteristic, for he was going to a sale of indigo, and set up a laugh which I did not think the lungs of mortal man were competent to. It was like a thousand people laughing, or the Goblin Page. He imagined afterwards that the whole office had been laughing at him, so strange did his own sounds strike upon his non-sensorium! But Tommy has laughed his last laugh, and awoke the next day to find himself reduced from an abused income of £600 per annum to one-sixth of the sum after thirty-six years' tolerably good service. The quality of mercy was not strained in his behalf; the gentle dews dropped not on him from heaven!"

From the India House it was, by the way, that some of Charles Lamb's most charming letters were written, some of them on scraps of official paper relating to weights and measures of goods. It was doubtless from the India House desk that those rollicking, joyous epistles, like the one just quoted, were penned to Manning, the professor of mathematics, to whom Lamb disclosed the happiest side of his nature. In "Archimedes," as he called him, "the man of many snipes," who could not only solve problems, but make grotesque faces, he seems to have found a congenial spirit. When Manning expressed his determination to go out to the East, to explore some remote part of

Tartary, Elia's soul was grieved. Manning was in Paris, and to him was sent a letter of expostulation:—

“My dear Manning,—The general scope and purpose of your letter afforded no indications of insanity, but some particular points raised a scruple. For God's sake, don't think any more of ‘Independent Tartary.’ What are you to do among such Ethiopians? . . . Read Sir John Mandeville's travels to cure you, or come to England. There is a Tartar-man now exhibiting at Exeter Change. Come and talk with him, and hear what he says first.

My dear friend, think what a sad pity it would be to bury such *parts* in heathen countries, among nasty, unconvertible, horse-belching Tartar-people! Some say they are Cannibals, and then conceive a Tartar-fellow *eating* my friend, and adding the *cool malignity* of mustard and vinegar! I am afraid, 'tis the reading of Chaucer has misled you—his foolish stories about Cambuscan, and the ring, and the horse of brass. . . . The Tartars, really, are a cold, insipid, smouchy set. You'll be sadly moped—if you are not eaten—among them. Pray *try* and cure yourself. Take hellebore—the counsel is Horace's, 'twas none of my thought *originally*. Shave yourself oftener. Eat no saffron, for saffron eaters contract a terrible Tartar-like yellow. Pray, to avoid the fiend. . . . *Shave the upper lip*. Go about like an European. Read no books of voyages (they are nothing but lies); only now and then a romance to keep the fancy *under*. Above all, don't go to any sights of *wild beasts*. *That has been your ruin*. . . . Have a care, my dear friend, of Anthropophagi! Their stomachs are always craving. 'Tis terrible to be weighed out at fivepence per pound; to sit at table (the reverse of fishes in Holland) not as a guest, but as a meat. God bless you, do come to England. Air and exercise may do great things. Talk with some minister. Why not your father? God dispose all for the best. I have discharged my duty.”

So while, as Carlyle tells us, “Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle; attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there,” Charles

Lamb sat at his desk in the India House, in the gloom of that smoke tumult, likewise attracting to himself many brave and intelligent souls, among whom this same Coleridge was not the least noteworthy. In its way the humourist's genius was as magnetic as the philosopher's, and, as the sequel has shown, none the less enduring. Nay, there are some of us not ashamed to confess that we find more human interest in the humourist of the India House than in the oracle of Highgate Hill. There must have been something wonderfully attractive in Charles Lamb's personality and stammering talk to have drawn round him so many notable figures, among whom we count, in addition to Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Talfourd, Manning, Barron Field, Basil Montagu, Carey, Cowden Clarke, and others. And amidst all these surroundings he was able to maintain his own individuality. He possessed an independent mind and was the last person in the world to brook patronage. Though he loved Coleridge all his life, when he suspected that sage of assuming the air of a superior person the resentment came quickly. You remember how Coleridge had been unwise enough to say that if Lamb wanted any knowledge he might apply to him. Whereupon Elia drew up that series of questions for the great philosopher and theologist to answer, among which were these:—

“Whether God loves a lying angel better than a true man? Whether the archangel Uriel could knowingly affirm an untruth, and whether, if he *could*, he *would*? Whether an ‘immortal and amenable soul’ may not come to be damned at last, and the man never suspect it beforehand?”

And now let us turn for a moment to the portrait of this India House clerk as it is presented to us in his maturer years. One of his friends describes him thus:—

"A light frame, so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would overthrow it, clad in clerk-like black, was surmounted by a head of form and expression the most noble and sweet. His black hair curled crisply about an expanded forehead; his eyes, softly brown, twinkled with varying expression, though the prevalent feeling was sad, and the nose slightly curved, and delicately carved at the nostril, with the lower outline of the face regularly oval, completed a head which was finely placed on the shoulders, and gave importance and even dignity, to a diminutive and shadowy stem. Who shall describe his countenance, catch its quivering sweetness, and fix it for ever in words? . . . Deep thought striving with humour, the lines of suffering wreathed into cordial mirth, and a smile of painful sweetness, present an image to the mind it can as little describe as lose."

We read elsewhere of an unruffled seriousness, a pervading sweetness and gentleness, and an expression "that reminded you of that painful smile which bodily disease and agony will sometimes put on to conceal their sufferings from the observation of those they love." "He had a long, melancholy face," says Proctor, "with keen, penetrating eyes." "He might have passed," Hood tells us, "for a Quaker in black," an opinion which is endorsed by Hazlitt, who says: "There is a primitive simplicity and self-denial about his manners, and a Quakerism in his personal appearance, which is, however, relieved by a fine Titian head full of dumb eloquence." He seems to have resented any attempt to interfere with the severe simplicity of his dress. One day he writes thus: "My tailor has brought me home a new coat, lapelled, with a velvet collar. He assured me everybody wears velvet collars now. . . . The rogue has been making inroads hitherto by modest degrees, foisting upon me an additional button, recommending gaiters, but to come upon me thus, in a full tide of luxury, neither becomes him as a tailor nor the ninth of a man."

There was in Lamb a deeper affinity with the Quaker spirit than was expressed in his outward garb. The sight of a Quaker soothed him, did him good for the rest of a day. He says he loved them and their gentle ways, though he could not live with them. You remember his exquisite description of "A Quakers' Meeting," with its peaceful quietude, its eloquent silence, its sweet blending of society with solitude. "The abbey church of Westminster," he says, "hath nothing so solemn, so spirit-soothing, as the naked walls and benches of a Quaker's meeting." At the close of his essay he says: "The very garments of a Quaker seem incapable of receiving a soil, and cleanliness in them to be something more than the absence of its contrary. Every Quakeress is a lily; and when they come up in bands to the Whitsun conferences, whitening the easterly streets of the Metropolis, from all parts of the United Kingdom, they show like the troops of the Shining Ones."

In this connection one reads how Charles Lamb fell hopelessly in love with that young Quakeress, Hester Savary, whom he used to meet in his daily Pentonville walks, but with whom he never had speech. She died in her youth, but her memory lives in those sweet lines, written by her silent and furtive admirer, which end thus:—

My sprightly neighbour! gone before
To that unknown and silent shore,
Shall we not meet, as heretofore
Some summer morning?
When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
A bliss that would not go away,
A sweet fore-warning?

Though in the outward aspect and inner nature of the quaint humourist there was recognisable a distinct note

of the Quaker spirit, there were many other notes that went to form that sweet-toned and delicately-blended humour which was but the expression of the whole man. There was in him not a little of the cloistral spirit, born of the cloistered influences of the Temple and Christ's Hospital. He loved to dwell in the shadow of a grave antiquity. His mind was largely retrospective; old books, old buildings, all things that had the rime of age upon them possessed for him a peculiar charm. In the boy sitting in that window-seat of the deserted house of Blakesmoor reading Cowley, or browsing in the fair pasture of the old Bencher's library, we have a typical foreshadowing of the mature humourist. Nothing delighted him more in his holidays than to visit one or other of the old universities, Oxford or Cambridge. In that essay of his regarding "Oxford in the Vacation," you remember how whimsically he describes himself as a quaint gentleman in black going about those venerable precincts, and mistakeable for a student of any degree up to that of a seraphic doctor. Books, especially old ones, his ragged veterans as he called them, were a necessity in his surroundings. He liked to dwell in a room with its walls roughened over by old books. He tells Wordsworth of an old bookcase which has followed him about like a faithful dog (only exceeding him in knowledge) wherever he has moved. Crabb Robinson says, in his "Diary," "I looked over Lamb's library in part. He has the finest collection of shabby books I ever saw; such a number of first-rate works in such bad condition is, I think, nowhere to be found." It was a habit of his to display his affection for some of his favourite folios by kissing the covers of them. These favourites were of the antique kind, such as Cowley, Marvell, Sir Thomas Browne, old Burton, Jeremy Taylor, Fuller, Izaak Walton, Beaumont and Fletcher,

Quarles, Wither, and Milton. He liked, as he said, to lose himself in other men's minds; he couldn't sit and think; his books thought for him.

There is a portrait of Charles Lamb by Maclise, with a touch of caricature in it, in which the humourist, with his large head, quaintly clothed body, and "immaterial legs," is shown seated at his study table, bending over his books, which he is regarding by the illumination of two tall candles. The artist seems to have desired to show, not only our Elia's love of books, but that he could not have too many of them; the manifestation of a loving greed for them. His right elbow rests upon an open volume spread in front of him, and his left is extended to another beyond; while still further away, and towards which his eyes are diverted, is one of his beloved folios maintained in an upright and open position by two sturdy tomes, which serve to back it up. The introduction of the candles was a happy thought on the part of the artist; it is characteristic. The humourist not only loved the soft illumination of long sixes, but there is reflected a certain mellow radiance of that form of light in the expression of his humour. The *Essays of Elia* are not to be read in fields, or groves, or alleys, but by the fireside, when the curtains are drawn. You remember how he has written of candles and of the charm of their light for the studious man. He says:—

"Man found out long sixes.—Hail candlelight! without disparagement to sun or moon, the kindest luminary of the three—if we may not rather style thee their radiant deputy, mild viceroy of the moon! We love to read, talk, sit silent, eat, drink, sleep, by candle-light. They are everybody's sun and moon. This is our peculiar and household planet. Wanting it, what savage unsocial nights must our ancestors have spent, wintering in caves and unilluminated fastnesses! They must have lain about and grumbled at one another in the dark.

What repartees could have passed, when you must have felt about for a smile, and handled a neighbour's cheek to be sure that he understood it! This accounts for the seriousness of the elder poetry. It has a sombre cast (try Hesiod or Osian), derived from the tradition of those unlanterned nights. Jokes came in with candles. . . . We have tried the affectation of a book at noonday in gardens and in sultry arbours; but it was labour thrown away. . . . By the midnight taper the author digests his meditations. By the same light we must approach to their perusal, if we would catch the flame, the odour. It is a mockery, all that is reported of the influential Phœbus. No true poem ever owed its birth to the sun's light. They are abstracted works:—

Things that were born, when none but the still night
And his dumb candle, saw his pinching throes.

. . . . Night and silence call out the starry fancies. Milton's 'Morning Hymn in Paradise,' we would hold a good wager, was penned at midnight; and Taylor's rich description of a sunrise smells decidedly of the taper. Even ourself, in these our humble lucubrations, tune our best-measured cadences (Prose has her cadences) not unfrequently to the charm of the drowsier watchman 'blessing the doors,' or the wild sweep of winds at midnight. Even now a loftier speculation than we have yet attempted, courts our endeavours. We would indite something about the Solar System. *Betty, bring the candles.*"

In contrast with his disposition towards the antique—to old books, old buildings, to quaint and bygone forms of thought and action, and to the reflective contemplation of them—was the sympathy he displayed for the real palpitating human life which surrounded him. Fleet Street was as necessary to his existence as the cloistered seclusion of the Temple. He loved London with a perfect love; its crowded thoroughfares were dear to him. Though he might be tempted at times to leave it for other scenes, he confessed that he must have a prospect of seeing Fleet Street again, or he should mope and pine away. So, consistent with this sympathetic interest in the

every-day life about him, we find him equally and sensitively alive to the modern spirit which manifested itself in the literature of his time. He loved old authors better than new ones, but he was quick to detect and acknowledge the best that was being thought and spoken in the world in which he lived. Among poets, Burns was one of his prime favourites, whose verses were to be recited for the edification of his friends. Of Cowper, he said to Coleridge, "I have been reading 'The Task' with great delight. I am glad you love Cowper. I could forgive a man for not enjoying Milton; but I would not call that man my friend who could be offended with the 'divine chit-chat of Cowper.'" He disliked Byron, and failed to appreciate Shelley, whose idealism was too remote for his sympathy and somewhat incomprehensible, but he was sufficiently appreciative of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. His criticism of these, his friends, however, was free, independent, and discriminating. He was never fulsome or dishonest in the expression of his opinion; but he had a large charity, and it is recorded of him that he was never heard to speak spitefully of any author. With that keen, penetrating, critical faculty which he possessed he was able to get at the very core and essence of things, and to take the measure of the greatest minds with which he came in contact. His insight was often pithily and humorously expressed. You remember that remark of his, that Wordsworth had hinted that he could write like Shakespeare if he had the mind—there was nothing wanting, said Lamb, but the mind. Could the undoubted egotism of the Lake-poet have been more happily unveiled? Our humorist had a strong objection to being preached at. Discussing with Wordsworth the merits and demerits of his "Cumberland Beggar," he says, "I will just add that it appears to me a fault of the 'Beggar' that the in-

structions conveyed in it are too direct, and like a lecture, they don't slide into the mind of the reader while he is imagining no such matter. An intelligent reader finds a sort of insult in being told, 'I will teach you how to think upon this subject.' This fault, if I am right, is in a tenthousandth worse degree to be found in Sterne, and in many novelists and modern poets, who continually put a sign-post up to show where you are to feel."

As Charles Lamb resembled Dr. Johnson in his love for Fleet Street, he resembled the great Cham also in being "a scorner of the fields," as Wordsworth has it. He had no real love for Nature, and this must be taken into account in considering the curious blend of which his humour was composed. He cared nothing for flowers, which were never seen in his rooms. He has a humorous reference somewhere to his ignorance regarding botany, having mistaken cowslips for geraniums, or been guilty of some other confusion in nomenclature when gathering flowers in the fields with his sister. When asked to write something about May-time, he frankly confessed that he had no capacity for that kind of subject, but recommended Leigh Hunt as the most fitting author to deal with it. Nature was most attractive when it came to him reflected through some one else's mind in the form of poetry, or when it was allied with some distinctly human sympathy. He can quote Andrew Marvell at length, regarding his dial of herbs and flowers, finding a "witty delicacy" in the lines when they are suggested to him as he contemplates the sun-dial in the Temple Gardens, sacred to the memory of the old Benchers who have walked there. So, too, will he quote the same quaint poet in his memories of the old Blakesmoor House, with its "hot window seat," where he sat and read Cowley, but the lines are to show his love for that sweet prison-house, and his

lack of any desire to roam beyond its garden walls. So he breaks out with—

Bind me, ye woodbines, in your twines ;
Curl me about, ye gadding vines ;
And oh so close your circles lace
That I may never leave this place ;
But, lest your fetters prove too weak,
Ere I your silken bondage break,
Do you, O brambles, chain me too,
And, courteous briars, nail me through.

"A scorner of the fields" in truth he was. Though he was in the habit of taking long country walks, Mr. Moxon says, "he had no taste for flowers or green fields; he preferred the high-road. The Garden of Eden, he used to say, must have been a dull place." The last letter he wrote to Manning, at a date not long before his death, is thus sadly concluded:—"I walk nine or ten miles a-day, alway up the road, dear London-wards. Fields, flowers, birds, and green lanes I have no heart for. The bare road is cheerful, and almost good as a street."

And now it becomes necessary to sum up in some brief and imperfect way one's general impression of Charles Lamb. His works ranged there upon one's shelves are not numerous or voluminous. The "Essays of Elia," an inconsiderable collection of poems, "Rosamund Gray," and "John Woodvil," with one or two other efforts at dramatic writing, "Specimens of Dramatic Poets," "Tales from Shakespeare" (the joint production of himself and his sister), together with an invaluable collection of letters never intended for publication—these form the substance of what he has left to us as an inheritance of his genius. In regarding this harvest of his thought we must remember that he was not an author by profession. In the days of straitened means he was constrained to write, because the money was needed, and he was then willing to furnish

jests for newspapers at sixpence for each jest. But in better days he had to be teased into writing the "Essays of Elia," which were not commenced until he had reached the mature age of forty-five, the last series of them being published in the year before his death. These were not written for money considerations merely. Proctor tells us that "high pay and frequent importunity failed to induce him to squander his strength in careless essays: he waited until he could give them their full share of meaning and flavour."

When we take a mental survey of the result, though we may be struck with the narrow limitations in which his genius expressed itself, yet within these limits he is absolutely unique. He had a distinctly poetic nature, but of all the poetry he has written he will be best esteemed by the lines to "Hester," the "Farewell to Tobacco" and "The Old Familiar Faces." He had not the constructive faculty necessary to the making of a novelist. "Rosamund Gray," sweet and pathetic story though it may be, is a proof of this, neither was he for the same reason successful as a dramatist. His farce, "Mr. H.," was a conspicuous failure, as also, in a stage sense, was his tragedy, "John Woodvil," with its strange blending of the Elizabethan spirit with thoughts and conditions altogether incongruous. Of the happy way in which he managed to render the spirit of the early dramatists in this tragedy, Hazlitt tells a good story. There are some lines which Lamb wrote beginning—

To see the sun to bed, and to arise,
Like some hot amourist with glowing eyes—
Bursting the lazy bands of sleep that bound him,
With all his fires and travelling glories round him,

which having been quoted by some other writer, and thus meeting Godwin's eye, "he was so struck with the beauty of the passage, and with the consciousness of having seen it before, that he was uneasy till he could recollect where,

and after hunting in vain in Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and other unlikely places, he sent to Mr. Lamb to know if he could help him to the author."

It is upon the "Essays of Elia" that Charles Lamb's literary fame will depend, and here, for some of us, he is the prince of humourists, and one of the most exquisite and delightful of prose writers. Not Addison, nor Steele, nor Goldsmith have sounded the depths of human nature more deeply, nor expressed themselves more felicitously. The beauties and graces of style of some of the older authors became his by familiarity of intercourse, but he has an inimitable style of his own, and, as Hazlitt says, his feelings and observations are genuine and original, taken from actual life, or from his own breast; and he may be said (if any one can) "to have coined his heart for jests, and to have split his brain for fine distinctions."

And now, a word in conclusion. Apart from the proof of it in his sister's case, there is ample evidence of the incomparable goodness of the humourist's heart. "He was a good man, if ever good man lived," said Wordsworth. He was generous, even lavish in his gifts, yet not improvident. One recalls how, under a mistaken impression regarding the need for it, he stammeringly offered his friend Proctor a hundred pounds, which he said was among the useless things he possessed and really didn't know what to do with. Then we come in his correspondence upon a brief letter to Godwin with a gift of fifty pounds. Mr. Moxon says, "his charities, for his humble means, surpassed those of most men. He had for some years upon his bounty three pensioners" He allowed that old school-mistress of his, who knew Goldsmith, thirty pounds per year. It is pleasant to have such testimony to the goodness of his heart, in view of which his foibles fade and sink into insignificance.

It remains, therefore, but to say that though he may still have his austere critics like Carlyle, to those gentle and congenial souls to whom the charm of Charles Lamb's humour has been revealed, and who can recognise the true worth of the life which gave expression to it, admiration of the author will not mark the limit of their regard, but will pass into permanent and unfading love for the man.

SONNET.

BEAUTY AND POWER.

BY GEO. MILNER.

OER the rock-face a tiny rivulet,
 Half-veiled in moss, descends to Niarbyll Bay ;
 With flowers of spring the grassy holms are gay,
 Primrose and celandine are thickly set,
 And violets lone creep down till they are wet
 With eager drifting of the salt sea-spray ;
 The billows tumble shoreward huge and gray,
 And o'er my head the clouds and crags have met.

Grandeur and sweetness, side by side, are here,
 And now are mine inalienable dower ;
 But which shall charm me most when life is bowed
 With weary burdens and the nights are drear ?
 The still, small voice of Beauty, not the loud
 Far-echoing thunder-tones of Ocean's Power.

Niarbyll, Isle of Man.



ON BIRKDALE SHORE.

BY WM. DINSMORE.

ALTHOUGH this great stretch of sandy shore, extending from Southport nearly to Liverpool, has been often termed "a barren solitary waste," I think it is not absolutely barren, and I find a glamour in its solitariness—there *is* a rapture on the lonely shore. Undoubtedly its loneliness repels the ordinary visitor, yet the poet, the naturalist, and the artist will find it is good for them to be here. The day-dreamer here may weave his web of fancies finer than the spider's spinning. The peculiar features of the landscape, the singular plants and flowers on the sand hills and in the miniature valleys, the ever-changing aspect of the sea and the glory of the sky, are sources of study and enjoyment which cannot fail to move sensitive natures. Shelley loved solitary places—

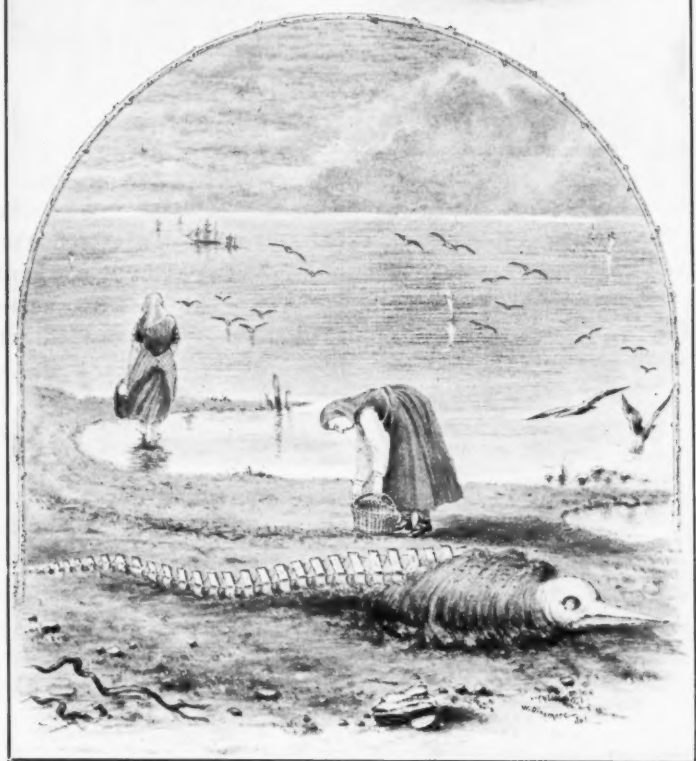
Where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be.

Menander, prince of Athenian comic poets—compared by Macaulay to Addison, whom he resembles in wit, tenderness, and knowledge of the world—who was

ON BIRKDALE SHORE,
A Gossip by the Sea side.

by

W. Dinsmore.



drowned, 291 B.C., while bathing in the harbour of Piræus, said—"How sweet to minds that love not sordid ways is solitude."

This is a day of brilliant sunshine, the light is exceedingly bright and powerful, the shadows cast on the sands are remarkably sharp, luminous, and of a deep purple tint; the air is delightfully fresh and pure. The heat is intensely fierce, resistless, and all pervading. What god is this imperial heat? queries Emerson in his poem "May-day." Is it—

Earth's prime secret, sculpture's seat?
Doth it bear hidden in its heart
Water-line patterns of all art,
All figures, organs, lines, and graces?
Is it Dædalus? is it Love?
Or walks in mask almighty Jove,
And drops from Power's redundant horn
All seeds of beauty to be born?

In spite of this conquering heat it is a great pleasure to a lifelong lover of Nature to wander on this shore, especially on this glorious day when the heavens appear to touch the earth, and the wind and the waves seem to murmur joy and peace. At times a singular silence pervades the scene. The marine birds fly low.

A large flock of sea-gulls congregate close to where I pause to observe them. They appear to confer seriously on important subjects. Perhaps they have met to consider the probability of a sudden change of weather, or to listen to a sage old bird's note of warning anent certain riflemen now prowling along the shore, armed, ready and willing to deprive the birds of their lives which the marksmen cannot restore even if they were assisted by the combined efforts of the human race. At the noise of a sudden shot of a rifle the gulls wing their flight to sea. In a few seconds they vanish out of my sight. Presently a gull flies past. It utters a peculiarly plaintive cry, a kind of mixture of

a wail and a song. I would fain see the bonnie birdie fly at once in a bee-line away across the waters. Have a care! free wanderer of the air; there is danger close at hand. Thou innocent creature of God, fly, make haste!

A youth passes by carrying a rifle on his shoulder. He has been slaughtering sea swallows; he carries about a dozen dead birds strung together. Forty-nine years ago I saw a sportsman (!) in this neighbourhood, merely for pastime, slaughtering the children of the wind and waves, and the grief I felt on that occasion still haunts my memory. One of the most interesting sights I have seen on this beach is the grave of a petrel. Evidently this memorial has been made by children. There is considerable skill shown in the construction of it. I admire the tender motive which prompted the hearts of the makers of this grave. A benison on those whose ingenious fancies contrived it. Close to this memorial rests the dead body of another child of the air with blood stains on its plumage.

Near to Formby I saw the remains of an animal, about eleven feet long, somewhat resembling the fossil *ichthyosaurus communis* found in the lias formation. A mass of putrid flesh lay about its neck and shoulders, on which a convocation of friendly flies were feasting and humming a song meantime. While I looked at this singular object, a couple of women, professional shell-gatherers, pass by. I enquired if they could name this creature. They could not. As they walked away one of them said, "Eh! there's some funny things in t' say." When the tide retired to its lowest boundary hardly a breath of wind wafted across the water, there was scarcely a ripple on its bosom.

The mighty giant, the sea, lay wrapt, apparently, in innocent slumber. There are evidences along this shore testifying how cruel the sea can be when roused by storm

and flogged into fury. Then, when the tempest is raging and lashing the billows with sublime contempt, and with resistless force, the ocean dashes man aside and scatters his work into fragments. Prayers, sighs, or tears will not prevail over the fierce foaming waves or angry winds. On this beach are the wrecks of four large vessels rotting away and slowly sinking into the sand. These shattered forms of the brides of the sea testify how remorseless he can be. Ye unlucky brides! your marriages were failures. I wandered along this beach for many miles in quest of a rocky portion of the coast; my search was in vain. I longed to gaze on sea-gardens such as I have seen on the rock-bound coast of my native haunts, where the pure, free Atlantic is seen in all its moods. There a naturalist might live a long life and find subject for interest always. Waving forests of gigantic sea vegetation grow there in wild luxuriance beneath the waves, and on the surface of those waves—rising and falling with every movement of them—are great coils of that exquisitely beautiful sea-plant, poetically named the “Mermaid’s Hair.” In sheltered coves, several fathoms deep, clear as crystal, lichens dwell and small fish swim gaily. In the rock pools—those beautiful tanks formed by Nature’s hand—are the gardens of the anemones, lovely in hue, and sea-plants of the most delicate and fairy-like forms and brilliant colours.

When I had strolled about six miles along this Birkdale shore I paused to admire the great expanse of view, the clouds slumbering on the hill tops of Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, and Wales, my old playmate the sea, and heaven’s blue arch expanding over all, then a feeling came over me impossible to express in words; a sense of freedom unutterable. In order to give some kind of outlet to my feelings, I ran as swiftly as I could, until I was tired. When I rested, at Formby, and turned my attention to

the traffic on the sea, I discerned a beautiful sight. I saw many dozens of vessels, some at rest, many with sails unfurled to court the gentle south wind, and one great vessel shaping her course northward. Surely Wordsworth beheld a scene like this when he wrote his sonnet—"The Voyage":—

With ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh,
 Like stars in heaven, and joyously it show'd ;
 Some lying fast at anchor in the road,
 Some veering up and down, one knew not why.
 A goodly vessel did I then espay
 Come like a giant from a haven broad ;
 And lustily along the bay she strode,
 "Her tackling rich, and of apparel high."
 This ship was naught to me, nor I to her,
 Yet I pursued her with a lover's look ;
 This ship to all the rest did I prefer :
 When will she turn, and whither ? She will brook
 No tarrying ; where she comes the winds must stir :
 On went she,—and due north her journey took.

Now the clouds, erstwhile slumbering on the Welsh mountains, responsive to the summons of the south wind, awake and commence a stately march northward. Hither they come. Some move in great masses, others journey in companies, some wander alone.

Mount higher, clouds, ye cronies o' mine, and screen me from the fierce blaze of the sun. How grateful to me is your shade.

These clouds, like lovers, hover and flutter about this beautiful queen of days. Dance and sing, ye wavelets ; chaunt a song in praise of this charming day. Bow your heads, ye plants and flowers rare ; make obeisance and murmur thanks to the all-wise Being, praise him for the gift of this most perfect day. And thou, worshipper of Nature, who finds fellowship in all things which bear the impress of divinity, mark this glorious time in thy

memory. It is charming to witness the cloud-shadows chasing over sea and land, and when the sun shines brightly on the curious marram grass, as softly green as emerald hue and so abundant on this Birkdale shore, the effect is exquisite to behold.

Very beautiful, too, is the decoration on the smooth surface of the sand, caused by the wind twirling the slender and sharply-pointed blades of bending grass, sometimes in curves, sometimes in circles and half-circles, as perfectly outlined as if drawn with compasses.

The flowers on the sandhills and in the tiny valleys are devoid of pleasant perfume; they image the memory of a human life passed in seclusion. I spent eight joyous hours, while wandering alone along this shore, devoutly contemplating—with thankful, solaced heart—all the wonders I saw above and around me, and finding enjoyment in solitude. The sound caused by the motion of the waves had a singular effect on my sense of hearing. While I listened to the crescendo and diminuendo of the music of the waves, I heard—in fancy—many other pleasant tones, such as the chiming of bells, the accents of friendly voices, the prattle of children—"better than all the ballads that ever were sung or said"—the softly-warbled songs of the troubadours of the air, and now, as I live, I hear the skirl o' the bagpipes. I pause and listen. 'Tis nae illusion—I hear again the birr o' the pipes, and I see a braw chiel marchin' up an' down the san'hills, playin' the unco blythesome jig music o' auld Caledonia. "O, piper lad, your chanter sets me astir, sets me fidgin' fu' fain. Sae merry is my heart the noo, in spite o' the heat o' the day, I wad like tae caper a Heelan' fling. Ma certe, piper callan', I prefer the soon' o' your pipes sae cheerie, tae the irritatin' noise o' the crack o' the rifle I hae heard frae morn' tae evenin' alang this sandy shore. Ma braw lad,

are ye ane o' the pipers o' the 'Royal Scots' wha played a selection o' music at a funeral service held in York Minster on the 24th o' April, eichteen hunner an' ninety-twa? The pipe music got a gran' heese that day in the estimation o' Lowlan' fowk wha heard the pipers play a bonnie Heelan' lament, accompanied by the saft roll o' the muffled drums. Some o' the congregation began tae snigger scornfully when the pipers struck up the pathetic wail, but as the mournfu' strains soared aloft, fillin' a' the space o' the glorious biggin, the smile on the scorners' faces was sune subdued, their hearts touched, an' the sigh o' their sighin' was manifest. As they hirpled awa', the gab o' their lips was loud in praise o' the music o' the chanter. Think o' it, my piper chiel, an' lilt awa', an' weet your mou' wi' usqueba.' When I told my friends at Birkdale that I heard a piper piping on the sand hills, far from the abodes of men, one of my friends, an Irish lady, said—"The piper is a kind and considerate man, and it was very thoughtful of him to select such a convenient spot where he could practise his drone without giving offence to any one."

In the evening as I returned to my lodgings I saw a great crowd of pleasure seekers on Southport pier moving towards the band pavilion.

At seven o'clock the band will introduce the "Caliph of Bagdad" to the audience, and trot out the "Bronze Horse" for their admiration.

Gentlemen of the band, play carefully. There are chieles among the trippers capable of "takin' notes"; by my faith many of them are good judges of music. They are a portion of the primeest breed in the world.

Many of them come from manufacturing districts, where the once fair face of Nature is now black and begrimed. Here they can behold her lovely fresh face, and nestle in her bosom, and the poor man can gaze on pictures, limned

by Nature, which all the wealth of the world cannot purchase. He can look with delight on the glories of sea and sky—

Those eternal forms,
Unhurt by a thousand storms.

Birkdale shore is level and so firm that it can accommodate vehicles of every kind. It is a splendid promenade for pedestrians, a safe playground for children, and a favourite exercise ground for horsemen.

A *creature* disguised as a man mounted on a large and powerful horse rides past me. The rider keeps savagely drumming with his heavy boot heels on the horse's sides. The animal frantically dashes onward and attempts to throw its tyrant. He carries a heavy cudgel, with which he unmercifully beats the steed on the head and body. The horse-torturer calls on his gods, he invokes their aid, he summons them to consign the animal to Hades. Judging by this horseman's imprecations, I think he has a crude notion of some kind of theology, a low state of morals, and a poor conception of the sweetness and nobility of humanity. Would an Arab so illuse his horse? I trow not.

I should be glad to see this Birkdale horse unseat his tyrannical rider, and, if it were possible, unfold a pair of wings and take his flight towards heaven. I should rejoice to learn, if this also were possible, that the apparition of the late Mr. Martin, M.P. for Galway, framer of the Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, appeared to this savage horseman, and so terrified him that he repented of his cruel conduct, and promised that from henceforth he would treat the lower animals gently and mercifully. There is a plentiful lack of kindness in the treatment of animals—especially in the management of the horse, the best helper and friend of man—distressing to think of and

heartrending to witness. One is inclined to ask, Are these cruelties to go on from generation to generation? When will true gentleness fill the hearts of cruel men?

Cruelty begets cruelty, and to persist in it is bad for man and beast. What is the real good, the better plan? An appropriate answer is found in the following lines by J. B. O'Reilly:—

“What is the real good?”
I asked in musing mood.
Order, said the law court;
Knowledge, said the school;
Truth, said the wise man;
Pleasure, said the fool;
Love, said the maiden;
Beauty, said the page;
Freedom, said the dreamer;
Home, said the sage;
Fame, said the soldier;
Equity, the seer.
Spake my heart full sadly,
“The answer is not here.”
Then within my bosom,
Softly this I heard:
“Each heart holds the secret;
Kindness is the word.”





LUCAS MALET'S "WAGES OF SIN."

BY EDGAR ATKINS.

GENIUS, like a club foot, often hampers progress. That is illustrated by this story, which may be summarised thus:—

James Colthurst, a painter, before he has reached that stage of eminence at which he can realise large sums by upsetting paint on canvas and signing the results, goes to a fishing village in the West Country. There he meets Jenny Parris, the handsome uneducated daughter of a fisherman. They fall in love and form an unsanctified union. The offspring is a daughter, "Little Dot." Colthurst's way to fame is hard. At one time, when in Paris, Jenny has to choose between the remnant of her own honour and the deaths from starvation of Little Dot and of Colthurst, "sick unto death." Jenny could not choose that they should die. Saved from death by Jenny, who becomes irksome to him, there came to Colthurst, later, fame and the love of a woman, Mary Crookenden, fitted to be his wife. But at that time he is a father and, though not nominally, really a husband. The difficulties and results produced by these circumstances are "the wages of sin."

The story is without intricate plot, yet interest never flags, so sudden and dramatic are the situations and start-

ling the constant flashes of caustic humour. Not that an author need pride himself on that power; the books which attain immortality are those which compel not dispel thought. That can be done by any writer endowed with the humorous gift. But only the originator of immortal thoughts will be accepted when desired; an imitator will be scornfully rejected. Hunger is not satisfied by sniffing the savour.

Mrs. Mary St. Leger Harrison, a daughter of the late Charles Kingsley, is the writer of the book. Some of its passages could only have been written by a woman; others demand the disguise of a masculine name.

Mary Crookenden is, in the opening of the story, a motherless girl of twelve summers, attended by a mulatress of whom her aunt disapproves, saying to her paternal uncle, the Reverend Kent Crookenden, the local rector, "her father makes a mistake in leaving her so much with that negro nurse after her mother's death." The rector replied: "There's much to be said for making a clean sweep after a funeral. Relics are a mistake. They sadly mitigate one's appreciation of the blessings of the present. The philosophy of forgetfulness is a very profound philosophy." Yet the constant presence of reminders soon ceases to produce any effect; the most hilarious laughter often issues from beneath the deepest hat band. It is not felt as an embarrassment in second courtship. The freshest grief may be stilled by new interests. The jobbing gardener has been known to weep for the loss of his son whilst robbing his unfortunate employer of his choicest bulbs.

Questioned by Mary about heaven, Kent Crookenden said: "I entertain a pleasing belief that I have been there once or twice for a minute or so, and that heaven proved to be a far roomier place than most pious persons down here are willing to picture it."

In times of peace a boy carrying a pot of paint is more to be dreaded than a regiment of soldiers. Far more the "pious persons" of the type referred to by the parson; those who say they cannot pickle onions without they pray, or (forgetful of the bountiful supply of water) drink neat gin without a feeling of warmth towards the Creator. To sell grey cloth to a customer who during the bargaining combines "counts" and celestial references is to insure making a bad debt. Such deem it more important to say grace than to pay the butcher. Piety, like sweating, is often a matter of temperament.

Of Jenny Parris the authoress says: "The young woman's power of self-control was regrettably limited. She felt strongly and reasoned little—a combination frequently leading to unfortunate complications." She was of the material out of which enthusiasts are made; generally individuals with much steam but no steering power. Enthusiasm is often largely endowed with impetuous resourcefulness. He is an unfortunate man who chops chips with his razor, and has to shave by singeing. In mere effervescence, old pop, in an atmosphere of genial warmth, may, perhaps, justifiably hold champagne in contempt. To Colthurst, Jenny vehemently contrasted the ancientness of the Crookenden lineage with her own—of course, to the advantage of the latter.

"Her vehemence greatly amused the young man. But Colthurst's amusement was of the observant, intellectual kind which rarely finds expression in laughter. For laughter, if it is genuine, usually implies a certain leisurely element in the mind—a power of mental standing still and contemplating oneself, and that fraction of the universal economy immediately submitted to one's notice in an easy after-dinner attitude."

The idea that stoppage of the flow of thought is requisite

for hearty and continuous laughter is striking. The humour of an incident may be keenly perceived, and yet it may be felt that the intellectual enjoyment would be jarred by laughter, or there may be no power of "mental standing still;" and ere the impression which would produce laughter has been received, others have followed in rapid succession to stay the impulse to mirth, but not necessarily to obliterate each other. On the contrary, as the authoress suggests, all may be registered. Then, too, laughing, like kissing, involves a certain amount of exertion, to make which there may be unwillingness. Those in whom it induces sciatica usually maintain hygienic facial repose. In spite of a widely opened mouth, the occupant of a dentist's chair emits no mirthful sound. As he who laughs most need not be most amused, neither is he at a funeral necessarily most grieved who seems most distressed; his feet may be asleep.

Germane to the subject the book contains this gem: "Depend upon it, the grass grows none the less fresh and green upon the graves of those we have loved for being warmed by a sunshine of kindly laughter as well as watered by tears."

"To Colthurst his fellow-mortals were absorbingly—in a sense, offensively—interesting. They possessed such splendid powers, and were, at the same time, to his thinking, so hopelessly weighted by stupidity."

Stupidity is not the only thing by which we are over-weighted in the opinion of the housemaid who carries coal to the upstairs drawing-room.

To a mind restless as was that of Colthurst, the soothing charm of woodland scenery, which he felt, is easy to understand. But how slight is the circumstance which will destroy it. Who can enjoy the most beautiful landscape with a bug on his back?

A pic-nic party in the West Country sing on their way,

Lord, wipe our tears away.

See how we strive and pray.

Largely permeating hymn poetry is this grotesque idea that the time of the Lord is to be employed in alternately listening to prayers, frequently involving readjustments of the universe at a few minutes' notice, and wiping those copious tears which indicate the extraordinary moisture of the temperament which usually regards itself as "meet for heaven," but may hereafter produce "in another place" inconvenient volumes of steam.

Rather than contemplate the application of a universal handkerchief of doubtful cleanness, the possessor of a delicate stomach will prefer to revert to our early infantile ideas of a heaven chiefly furnished with trumpets of inordinate length, and gowns of an extent which renders walking difficult, and all athletic exercise, except a modified form of sack race, impossible. This shall be called irreverent. But what of teaching stuff which lends itself to such a description?

A picture by Colthurst was hung at the Academy.

"All the critics were in a flurry. They cackled up and down the columns of the newspapers and pages of the magazines, like a pullet who has laid her first egg on a frosty day in December. And yet, in point of fact, none of them had laid an egg, but had only found one, which, with all deference to the talent of critics and high functions of criticism, is quite another matter."

Criticism upon criticism, like colliding crockery, commonly causes considerable crashing. With much forethought the maternally-inclined hen practises clucking some twenty-eight days prior to the possible advent of her brood; but such is her vanity that she will risk the loss of

each egg rather than forego an uproarious cackling on its arrival. It is vain to tender advice to her of the folly of her action. It will be disregarded because contrary to her nature, she will continue her laborious indiscretion (with vacations for moulting) till, at an advanced age, passing from perch to pic-nic, by the transmigration of souls or cookery and truth, as taught at Technical Schools, she becomes, it may even be, "turtle soup." With advancing education, "spring chicken" is obsolete and abandoned, in favour of "gallinaceous juvenile jumper." The charnel-house odour of hash meat is a positive recommendation when served as "eclectic alimentary compound." A capital dish; the weary may safely lean his back against the smell.

Mrs. Crookenden's two daughters, Mary's cousins, had grown up. "Adela and Carrie, who had now exchanged the schoolroom and brown holland frocks for a well-grown and buxom young womanhood, were not distinguished for sustained power or variety of topics in conversation. They were estimable girls, but both their minds and bodies moved slowly. They had excellent digestions. They were very industrious. They did an immense amount of needlework. They read an immense number of books. By the needlework the poor of Sierracombe and of a certain London parish did profit appreciably. By the books they did not themselves, however, profit in any appreciable degree."

Lucas Malet can certainly be severe on her own sex. As she delineates Mrs. Crookenden's daughters they would seem best suited for a Christmas fat cattle show, there labelled "Sweats and Chills," or "Two heifers in frocks." Imagine endeavouring to interest them in hydrostatics, the integral calculus, and other things we do not ourselves understand, and hesitate to attempt to spell, whilst, at long intervals, they alternately blatted "indeed!"

Miss Crookenden said of herself—"I don't call myself a spendthrift. I call myself generous, indifferent to base considerations of pounds, shillings, and pence, superior to the love of money."

An ounce of common sense is better than a ton of "noble sentiments," frequently the precursor of an ignoble ending. To persons "indifferent to base pecuniary considerations" a public funeral is often accorded, at which there is considerable mourning by ratepayers that the event has been so long delayed.

Madame Jacobini, Mary Crookenden's companion, taken ill abroad, remarks of the doctor: "He will give me just precisely what I tell him to give me. Why, that is what every sensible person calls in a doctor for—to confirm their own opinion, and prescribe the medicine they have a fancy to take."

The widespread aversion to lawyers, soldiers, policemen, pawnbrokers, and parsons, is natural, because producing nothing, they are all parasites, but why it should be extended to doctors passes comprehension. To assuage the suffering of others the doctor hourly carries his life in his hands; often with the certainty that he will not only be defrauded of his own fees, but in addition asked to try to get a reduction of the undertakers' charges—a small commission on which is possibly his last vestige of hope of remuneration.

There is a capital passing hit at classical education: "The Apollos and Venuses and all those other ill-conducted classical divinities whom it is customary to make such free use of in the education of English youth."

In the days of our adolescence we are put into the amatory oven and admonished against letting ourselves get hot. No wonder the young doubt the wisdom of their seniors; they are driven to conclude we should stand on

our heads were it not that thoughtless cobblers make boots to fit the feet. Madame Jacobini reflected "the rising generation are rather incomprehensible. They are too wise, too acute, far too reasonable." One of our strongest delusions is about the "younger generation" who are always "so different from what we were at the same age." Heaven be thanked for the difference; if we were content to accept the nonsense given as "reasons" for "whatever is" being right, and the younger generation refuse it, they show they are not such fools as we were. But will not the fact prove to be we have forgotten our impressions of a similar period, and are irritated by our juniors' detection of our defects? An ancient rooster, who has lost his voice, will not hesitate, if a younger bird deny his power of crowing, huskily to call him a liar.

A fixed latitude in the physiognomy cannot be expected for the mouth which, when a friend yawns, suggests to him the advisability of a chloride of lime diet. Many are "closed for repairs" because of an indiscreet emission of truth.

Miss Crookenden and Madame Jacobini discuss the interminable subject of marriage—for which, in so large a population, there is a good deal of material. "Marriage is a sort of grave, Sara, in which, it seems to me, women are called upon to bury a whole lot of precious and delightful possibilities. . . . Marrying one man is equivalent to refusing all other men. And that in itself is an agitating consideration, for many men have merits." Leasing husbands would probably commend itself to this young lady. Not so to the men. They would nearly all be ticketed: "To Let: rent greatly reduced." Upon the subject, blunt truth—the danger of which has just been illustrated with a chemical reference—could not be expected from Mary. It cannot be quoted "in

society." You will astonish the company if you lick your plate at dinner; but far more so by stating the obvious fact that marriage as ordinarily conducted on the British system is nothing but maintaining a pregnant invalid to supervise a nursery for twenty years. And then—But the company is too respectable to hear any more.

Colthurst was refined and sensitive in character; yet Jenny Parris and Little Dot were in existence. The righteous may "rage furiously" at the idea of such circumstances co-existing, and may deny their possibility. But some of the finest verses, most magnificent pictures, some of the acts of most unselfish heroism have been the works of men somewhat wanting in Josephian stolidity. He never forgot the existence of Jenny or Dot, or their need of support, and although, after the Paris incident, he and Jenny sank to mere acquaintances, he continued to visit her and her child. On his way to their lodgings one day, Dot ran up to him, her eyes dancing with delight: "Why, Jim, we'd almost given up expecting you! It's ever so long since you've been to see us." "Colthurst winced." But not being the ordinary parent, overflowing with affection, he did not relieve his suffering by beating his child, and an outburst of that shocking language which is often the sole reminiscence which children, happily early left orphans, retain of their father.

Colthurst entered the house in which Jenny lodged, "and stood face to face at last with that which he shrunk from, deplored, dreaded, that which, as he feared, rendered his life rotten at the core, and clipped the wings of his fairest hopes and aspirations,—the skeleton of a dead love and a living sin." A fine opportunity for the perfectly respectable to point the finger of scorn. They never realise that their own respectability is, very possibly, entirely owing to the happy absence of temptation.

Temptation is largely a matter of mechanics. If a ten-horse-power temptation meet a two-horse-power will, temptation is sure to win. It was a consummate knowledge of human nature which taught men to pray, not that they may overcome or defeat temptation, but that they may not be led into it.

It would be regrettable to overlook Lady Calmady, for she suggested "a singularly enchanting cross between a Greek nymph, a Scotch deerhound, and a very well-bred Eton boy." Neither must be omitted "Lady Theodosia Pringle and her amiable, anxious, squat-figured, elderly daughter. No one pursues her social studies with more praiseworthy pertinacity than Lady Theodosia. But Providence has seen fit, in its inscrutable wisdom, to deny her a large income. She, therefore, pursues them gallantly on foot, unless the weather is phenomenally atrocious, when she has been known reluctantly to bestow her alert and upright person in an omnibus. She, consequently, habitually arrives at her destination furnished with a healthy appetite and a pair of questionably clean boots."

Such cutting sarcasms upon the feminine sex would be permitted to no male writer. The connection of the "healthy appetite" and "questionably clean boots" is exquisitely cruel. It is surprising that an authoress not wanting in genuine sympathy would pen such a savage passage. But she scorns scattering sweet-scented sham self-sacrificial sentiments.

In a life so full of unsatisfied desire as was that of Colthurst it was inevitable mental harass would be set up. "If," he said to himself, "one could only stop the machinery for an hour or two and get a rest. Expunge thought and feeling, put out one's eyes, shut one's ears, sit dumb, blind, solitary in the void." It is ours to fire the rocket: not to control its course.

"Light natures," he says, "cannot stand sadness. It sours them, deprives them of the paltry use they might otherwise have had. . . . But the strong natures can stand it. It braces and enriches them." Doubtful doctrine is that which teaches "Sweet are the uses of adversity." Are they? What man who steps on a frying-pan and brings its opposite edge in contact with his shin will apologise for upsetting its contents? "It is the moderate griefs that wear long, that kill—if, indeed, any griefs kill—not the noisy ones." The physiological exercise of loud bellowing induces oblivion of its own cause. A wonderful provision of Nature for eliminating nasal iridescence.

A mural tablet to the first wife is the advent of the second. It acts as an advertisement of a vacant position. Humanity is always seeking consolation; the heels which protrude the socks believe themselves to harmonise with the new clog soles.

The book contains a suggestion which ought to entirely eradicate breaking promises. "Shave your head when you swear, and you are much more likely to keep your oath, be sure, then, if, trusting to the compelling power of your own high sense of honour merely, you remain unshaven." Were the system in practice, no man would ever know the colour of his own hair.

After years of toiling, struggling, fighting, Colthurst attained success, only to prove it "Dead Sea fruit." They who die pursuing it have, at least, possession of hope. Except the few who attain it in early life, its conquerors, when it does come, like Robert Lowe, realise that gone are—

The lips that would have loved to speak my praise,
The eyes that would have brightened at my name.

A scrap of butter-paper fluttering in a tree may represent a most rare bird—till we near it.

Colthurst, having arrayed himself in evening dress for a festivity, is informed Little Dot is stricken with typhoid fever and lamenting his absence. Without delaying to change his clothes he went to her mother's lodgings, and spent the whole night in nursing his child, not betraying the slightest impatience when Dot "wriggled her restless head about till her hot cheek rested against the cool, smooth surface of his shirt-front," nor when Jenny, "with characteristic absence of ceremony, placed the jelly-tin on his knee."

Dot, in half delirium, delivered some terrible stabs to her father: "I wants you to kiss me, Jim. . . . Oh nurse me, Jim. . . . I likes to be against you. Your clothes smell so lovely. . . . I loves you better'n anyone. . . . I wish you'd come and live along of us. I wish you was my father. . . . I loves you better'n anybody. And the children in the street throws it up against me I ain't got no father. . . . They drives me away 'cause they says their mothers says Mammy's a kept woman, and so they mustn't 'sociate along of me."

When Jenny becomes aware Colthurst is engaged to Miss Crookenden she visits her to make known his relations to herself. Afterwards, with vitality rapidly ebbing from consumption, she journeys to her birthplace, there to meet the Angel of Death, who, though he sometimes tarries, never refuses, ultimately, to extinguish that "Life" which to so many is a cruel mockery.

During her final hours, Colthurst is by Jenny's bedside, sponging her face from the stains of hæmorrhage from the lungs. Leaving her father's house he is killed by falling over the outside steps.

The story is both fascinating and repulsive.

At the mention of Colthurst, Mrs. Grundy, when not

suffering from rheumatism, may put up her hands shocked, and, as already suggested, deny the possibility of anything but evil in a man having relations such as his with Jenny Parris. But the aged lady's intelligence is too limited to do more than look at one circumstance, and found upon it, what she imagines to be, her judgment, although the loss of her head would make no perceptible difference in her understanding.

The book is so full of keen, scathing, cutting, humour that it is as if one walked a floor strewed with percussion caps of wit which incessantly give off unexpected reports. The authoress is, in the essayist's judgment, entitled to rank with George Eliot, so far as humour is concerned, but that of Lucas Malet is finer in its edge, shorter, crisper, terribly cutting, not so genial, more refined—often tinged with a vein of sadness. She does not, to the same extent as George Eliot, make her characters humorists; she lets her own flash startlingly.

The description "of the saddest poverty of all," that "which maintains an air of superficial smartness," in the first chapter of Book IV., although lightened with passing touches of humour, is pathetic in the extreme. The pathos excites no surprise; humour and pathos are as surely found together as sherry and bitters. How shall the mind capable of seeing the faint gleam of humour, be blind to the shadow of pathos?

In the interest of our creditors it is a wise provision of nature that our pathos seldom extends to pecuniary demonstrativeness. Pathos, like bacon, curls up under too severe a trial. It is more expensive to give than to receive. It is economical to be "deaf in the generous ear."

The story delineates "relations" generally avoided by lady writers. Although recording occasionally the "strong language" of her men characters, the authoress is herself

never indelicate: yet her subject is divided from indelicacy only by a hairline. She never lifts the veil of the life as lived, but confines herself to showing the resulting misery, refinedly, but unmistakeably, warning as well her sisters as her brothers of the consequences of "sin."

To whom shall sympathy be extended? Many will say to Jenny. To Colthurst the essayist gives none, reserving all for the child, who, conscious, but not comprehending the psychological effect, of the proximity of her own father, when gently nursed in his arms, murmurs in semi-delirium, "I wants you to kiss me, Jim. . . . I wish you was my father." Little Dot's presence was her misfortune. Ere she had got much beyond her infancy, the brutality and injustice of her parents are brought home to her by the little children, who won't "'sociate along of her," because of her bar sinister. Perhaps she sometimes wondered why she was here. Possibly incorruptible Justice suggested to her that she should curse her parents, and inviolate Truth openly told her they deserved nothing more.

Justice would not confine that reward to the parents of illegitimate issue. Though free from any dishonourable stain to the offspring, the reckless or unregulated creation of human life is brutal, devilish, bestial. The arrival of an additional actor upon the earthly stage is among the most stupendous events. Yet it never seems to be regarded as an incident for which there is any responsibility, or of much more consequence than licking a postage stamp, or the advent of the cuckoo, and inevitable as the new moon. Not Esau alone, but every child cries, "with a great and exceeding bitter cry, Bless me, even me also, O my father."

It is astounding that with the same object lesson repeated day by day we never seem to realise, never to

consider, that each life may exist in wretchedness, misery, degradation, for indefinite years. He who kills a fellow creature, it may be instantaneously, painlessly, is justly called a murderer, and punished. But he who creates a "life," the murdering of which is co-extensive with its duration, claims to be honoured as a parent, that the days of the victim may be long in the land in which the terrible tragedy of his own personality is enacted.

Is there no hope that men will ever learn they are directly *responsible* for offspring? It is vain to attribute the sorrow and suffering spread around to "Providence" or "Inscrutable Wisdom." It is all traceable to "Improvvidence" or "Incredible Folly"—the violation of obvious natural laws.

The thoughtful, the considerate, the just, are never heard attributing events to "Providence;" it is peculiarly the ill-conducted ally of the brutal, the lazy, and the dissolute, who usually have the sublime assurance to attribute to it the effects of all the ill they produce!

Stay a vain contest; the world is full of inconsistencies; the pen which fulminates against liquor drinks incessantly whilst so doing. It seems idle to remonstrate; it is so easy to follow the ordinary course, which is downward. If rain had to struggle upward, we might have a drier climate!





THEN AND NOW : A MEXICAN CONTRAST.

BY J. G. DE T. MANDLEY.

IN the stillness of midnight—the fire yet burning brightly—I lean back in my cosy arm-chair, loth to leave the room this bitterly cold night, and, slowly smoking a well-seasoned pipe, allow my mind to go back to a time and scenes long since past, but still green in my memory. On my knees are a few copies of a small illustrated periodical named *La Luz* (Light), the latest number dated Ciudad de Mexico, 17 de Noviembre, 1892. *La Luz* is a religious publication, and its contents have given rise to my musings.

Once more I am mounted on my fiery, mountain-bred little horse, and in the heyday of my youth and vigour. The warm blood courses quickly through my veins, as my lithesome steed bounds like an antelope up the steep, craggy heights, plunges through cool, stony-bedded streams, rushes madly across some intervening plateau, carpeted with the springiest of fine short turf, and then springs up again the narrow, winding mountain path, each bend carrying us higher and higher. A tropical sun is shining out of a cloudless sky, but in the marvellously dry, pure air, cooled by a gentle breeze, we feel not his ardent rays. We—the mozo and I—alight at a side door in a high wall enclosing a well-stocked and carefully-tended fruit and flower garden

attached to a large *convento* (or monastery). A few yards further on is the chapel, the façade richly decorated in the prevailing "churrigueresco" (grotesque renaissance) fashion, and shaded by a row of stately cypresses. Although some 8,500 feet above sea level, the spot is well sheltered, and the red-berried mountain ash, the silvery birch, and other graceful trees—festooned with lovely flower-bearing creepers—mimosa, huge cacti, ferns, and flowers grow luxuriantly in clumps between the rocks and as natural hedges skirting the patches of cultivated land. Gay plumaged birds, gorgeously coloured butterflies and other winged insects darting or fluttering in every direction, enliven the scene and heighten its charms.

No welcome could be heartier. Exquisite fruits, delicious pastry, marvellous sweetmeats, and a bottle of good, honest red wine are quickly set before me, and I am urgently pressed to do ample justice to the repast. The moment I draw back my chair, the never-failing *cigarito*, and a richly-chased silver dish holding live charcoal, in lieu of matches, are put on the table. This is the signal for conversation, and we—the Padre Superior, some half dozen *clérigos* and *religieux*, their bare feet on the marble-tiled floor, and I—are soon exchanging the latest news. Another repulse has just been suffered by the Northern rebels in their march on the capital. Isolated bands of fugitives from the main body of the retreating *pronunciados* are declared to be "plundering the ranchos and mining establishments, and even attacking the conventos." My friends are loud in their denunciation of the atrocities committed by those "*malditos chinacos*." To a "miraculous interposition" they attribute the non-appearance of those "ruffians" here; yet, I could add, if I dared, that I have not seen any evidence, on my way, of the arson, pillage, and slaughter, so graphically described. Indeed, it seems to

me I am but listening again to a former recital, made not long ago, of the outrages attributed to the followers of the party now in power, but then in arms against the Government. But I must not say so. Los Conservadores are now the rulers, and are they not the supporters of the Church and the protectors of the *gente decente*? On the other hand, do not los Liberales preach "liberty of cults;" sequestration of the *biénes del cléro*, mostly real estate, and would not they deprive the clergy even of their cherished *fuéros* (immunity from civil law)! I do, however, venture to assure my friends that they can now ride to the city in safety, provided they are escorted by a couple of men as well mounted and armed as I and my mozo are. We then turn to lighter topics; the gossip of our city—a provincial capital—being greatly relished. Later on, packs of cards are brought out, and we indulge, innocently enough, for the highest stake does not exceed a cuartillo (a silver coin nominally the equivalent of 1½d), in the great national, but very stupid, game called *mónté*. As I bid my friends "Adios!" the kind-hearted and truly benevolent Padrecito gives me a hearty embrace, and cries: "God bless thee, my son; thou hast ever a merry heart. Would to God thou wert in the fold, and not a lost soul, doomed to eternal fire." He says this feelingly, and I do not resent it, for I know that the good man has none of the philosophic doubts of a St. George Mivart, but is as orthodox as to the belief in the "pains of hell" as is the present Bishop of Nottingham, and that his regret is heartfelt. As I ride away, I lift my sombrero to the kindly group, and they and their peaceful home are quickly out of sight.

Relighting my pipe, a rapid change of memory ensues. Now, I am in a narrow, tortuous street, following the remains of an old German watch-dealer. His last breath was, I am told, drawn in perfect solitude; for the moment

the eye began to glaze and the limbs to stiffen, his hitherto much attached servants hastily fled from the house. "The Devil," these poor folk—aye, and most of the *gente decente* also—firmly believe "comes to snatch and bear away the soul of the dying heretic the instant it quits its earthly tenement." In the darkness that quickly follows sunset, the sparse supply of ill-trimmed oil-lamps, although favouring our object, adds to the gloom of our march. We are anxious not to attract attention; but it is galling—here, where so much reverence is paid to the dead—to see even the meanest lépero, in his dirty rags, go past the bier without raising his straw hat, although the furtive, sullen glance betrays a knowledge of what is borne before us. At the end of the street a halt is made, and, after a short pause, the coffin is hastily borne away. I ask the reason why we do not follow. "Hush! It must not be known where we bury him." In wonder, I find that we are about to disperse; but I soon learn that it has been resolved that we make our way separately to the place of interment. It is the wood-yard belonging to the Mint, which is leased to an English company. Between high stacks of short logs and billets (chiefly of the dwarf mountain oak), we see, by the light of a solitary lantern, a deep hole sunk in fragments of bark, sawdust, dung, and rubbish, the accumulation of many years. Without the slightest attempt at any ceremony, the coffin is quickly lowered, and spades at work. As the "mourners" are turning away, I ask, "Did he take his own life, or was he an atheist?" "No," is the response of our Vice-Consul. "Why, then, have we buried him as though he were a dog—without a single prayer?" "Ask — (the Prussian Vice-Consul), it's not *my* business; he was not a British subject." I do so, and that official replies, laughingly, "Oh, the fact is, I'm not up to that sort of thing. You

may undertake the business if you like ; but don't attempt to start a hymn, or we shall have the *plébé* breaking in on us, and there'll be an awful shindy." Cigars are already lit, and there is a general movement towards the gates. We go out as we entered, silently, and, indeed, furtively, as though we had been engaged on some evil deed.

The remembrance of that dismal funeral brings back another scene. A loud, unmusical, and even boisterous clanging of bells is heard. In an instant all is excitement. Out speeds the porter, who quickly returns, and, almost breathlessly, cries out: "He comes this way." All hands now to the work ; the pen is thrown down, customers hustled out, and the office closed. Plants and flowering shrubs, in boxes and pots, are brought from the courtyard, the galleries, and azotea, and speedily line the curb of the footpath. The señoritas and maids have got out the figured white muslin curtains, always kept ready in ottoman-boxes near the upper windows (which open in the French fashion), and are hastily draping the balconies. Rows of handsome silver-mounted carriage lamps, the candles lit, are slipped into their sockets on the rails of the balconies ; the curtains looped with bright-coloured silk sashes ; and the ladies then retire. A glance up the street shows that every house and place of business is similarly decorated, according to the means and taste of the occupants. Meantime, in the guard-house, just opposite, the officers on duty have thrown down their cards and cigarettes, buttoned their coats, put on their boots, and are buckling on their accoutrements. The tinkle of a hand-bell now tells that the procession is entering the street. By this time the ladies, now wearing the graceful mantilla, re-appear on the balconies, and begin to throw choice flowers on to the roadway. Tinkle, tinkle goes the small silver bell, the sound growing

clearer and clearer. Then from the guard-house, in a loud, sonorous tone, comes the word of command: "Form guard—His Majesty the King of Kings." To the roll of drum and blast of trumpet the men fall into line. Down on their knees, some even quite prostrate, go all onlookers save the few "heretics," who wisely shield themselves from observation. Sweet-smelling incense fills the air as the richly arrayed priest, riding under a gorgeously embroidered silk canopy, the sacred elements, covered by a jewelled napkin, in his hands, accompanied by attendant priests, monks, and acolytes, all carrying tall lit tapers, pass slowly by. The silence of the crowd is impressive. Some wealthy Catholic is *in extremis*, and this is the Viaticum. To-morrow we shall most probably witness the funeral, with "*Pompa entera*"—that is, a heavily gilt, glass-panelled hearse, a military band, a guard of honour, and a procession of the clergy, acolytes, and mourners. "Half-pomp" is, of course, a far less imposing affair. The Viaticum, I hardly need say, is also carried to the poor whenever requested; but mark the difference. The priest, an umbrella held over him, and his meagre escort hurry along on foot, the hand-bell being rung quickly and impatiently to warn pedestrians to clear the pavement. Few, beyond beggars and poor women, attempt to kneel, much less prostrate themselves; but nearly all uncover their heads.

The thought strikes me—how should I fare were I on my death-bed in this gay city? At the ports where British guns can be brought to bear, we poor heretics have our own "Campo Santo." At Tampico there is one, not far outside the barriers of the town, and—although the few conspicuous monuments and headstones are heavily pitted with shot marks, being often employed as targets by the gilded youth of the town when taking the morning ride—

the great beauty of the scenery around, the infinite variety and luxuriance of the vegetation, and the ever-glorious sky make the spot attractive. But—ah—that horrid hole in the wood-yard; the furtive burial; and the callous indifference of quondam friends! Yet, the interment of that old man, such as it was, was a contravention of the law. The body ought legally to have been carted far from the precincts of the city, and shot, with other such offensive matter, into some ravine or secluded spot, and there left to the vultures and other feeders on carrion.

The fire has burnt away its centre, and, in the miniature crater, a glowing cave is forming. My thoughts diverted—a new and more pleasing recollection comes. Now 'tis Holy-week. The church bells—poetic fiction says—have flown away to the Eternal City to be blessed by the Pope. In each belfry a *matraja* supplies their place, and the excruciating noise made by that machine—a huge cylindrical wooden rattle—is said to typify the “grinding of Judas’s bones.” Deep mourning is worn by the *gente decente*, and the “stove-pipe” silk hat is seen on many a head ordinarily adorned with the gay gold and silver-laced sombrero. Groups of men and women, rich and poor, are, day and night, seen kneeling at the corners of streets and against the walls of public buildings, their eyes devoutly raised to some niched and canopied lamp-lit image, high above them, and heard in fervent tones responding to the prayers of the priest. They are visiting the “Stations of the Cross,” most of the churches and convents having each a separate circuit. Next comes the most exciting time of all. Christ has been crucified! On a wide bier, covered with a deep black velvet pall, an effigy, life-size, of the dead Saviour is borne through the streets. The wounds caused by the crown of thorns, the nails, and the spear, are fearfully depicted, and the whole figure admirably expresses

the intense agony of a cruel, torturous death. Priests, cowed and barefooted friars, men, women, and children, of every degree and station in life, crowd round the bier, their sobs and lamentations painfully audible. Every few moments there comes, seemingly from the effigy itself, a startlingly weird, plaintive wailing, and at each repetition the groans and cries of the people burst out with frenzy, although most of them must know that it is but the sound of the *pito* (a reed pipe), blown by players concealed beneath the bier. Woe to the man who should dare to laugh at such moment; but still greater woe to the foreigner whom some fanatic should point out and denounce as a Jew. The *plebé* are *exaltados*, and a hundred knives would be drawn in an instant. Next morning (Saturday) ropes are fixed across the corners of the principal streets, and strung with fireworks. "Here comes Judas!" the people cry. "*Judas!* Why, it is our old friend, Mr. Guy Fawkes." The battered silk hat, the threadbare black clawhammer coat, the frayed and patched trousers, the broken-down, open-toed boots, and the ugly mask—Yes, 'tis he! The Guy, or Judas, is taken from his chair and hung by the neck to the centre of the rope, to the intense delight of all beholders. But, take care, for inside that tubby straw-stuffed paunch there generally is stowed a glass bottle filled with gunpowder and scraps of metal. As noon approaches the excitement becomes increasingly manifest. The first stroke of the hour is struck on the cathedral bell, and all eyes are fixed on the monk who stands ready to apply the light. At the last stroke off go the fireworks, and in a few seconds Judas is wrapped in flames, and quickly blown into fragments. Simultaneously every bell in the city is hammered frantically; in the squares, and on the hills for miles around, hand rockets are hurtling and detonating louder than rifle shots; and as the field guns

join in with a double royal salute, the roar is deafening. But, ah! how picturesque are the scenes in the plaza on Easter Sunday. The pavement is lined with white canvas-covered stalls, filled with positive marvels of art in white sugar confectionary, fruit, and flowers. The great gates of all the churches are open to their widest extent. From the square, the high altar of the cathedral is plainly seen, crowded with successive rows of wax tapers, evenly graded in pyramidal form, and which brilliantly light up the jewelled crucifix, the tabernacle containing the sacred vessels, the triptych, the many gold and silver vases, the illuminated missal, and wreaths and other symbols made from the choicest and rarest of plants and flowers. Springing from the top of the marble reredos, and towering high above it, is a heavily gilt circular temple with Corinthian columns, in which is a colossal image of "La Madre de Dios," standing on a crescent of solid silver. A golden diadem resplendent with sparkling gems encircles her head; her garments are of the richest and brightest hued velvets, satins, and silks, sewn with pearls and precious stones, and fringed with gold and silver lace; round her neck are rows of costly pearls, and in her ears, and on every finger, are rings set with diamonds, rubies, and other rare gems. From the canopy of this structure rises another, but smaller, temple, in which stands an image of Christ, and round its base are draped figures of the Apostles. High Mass is being celebrated, and the church is crowded with rich and poor, side by side. No seats are provided, each lady bringing her own little carpet, on which, when not kneeling, she sits sideways, but straight as a dart, manipulating her fan with infinite grace and dexterity. Outside, facing the broad flight of steps, and drawn up in review order, are a squadron of dismounted cavalry, their lances gay with

bright pennons, and one or more regiments of infantry, in full uniform of light blue coats, brass buttons, large yellow or red epaulets, white cross belts, and white trousers, and, at a respectful distance, the spectators close in the square. The tolling of the great bell gives warning of the approach of the most solemn part of the ceremony—the Elevation of the Host. The moment the gorgeously-arrayed celebrant says, "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus," and the small bell is rung, the officers motion to the troops. Off goes every shako, and every knee is bent throughout the square—the troops kneeling as well as the civilians—and perfect silence reigns. Clouds of incense now begin to fill the church, and little else than the huge suspended silver candelabra and pendant banners and streamers remains visible. On this occasion the usual choir has been largely augmented by professional and amateur singers. Brass, reed, and stringed bands, harps, and a dozen or more grand pianofortes supplement the organ, trying to the utmost the ability of the conductor to prevent ludicrous discord. And, instead of the ordinary chant-like tunes, music of a florid kind is used, even well-known operatic airs being introduced. The service over, the congregation hasten to the stalls, and a brisk business is soon doing in the tempting wares they display, mostly the work of nuns and their pupils, and a joyous look is worn by all around.

My reverie is over, and I take up a copy of *La Luz*. Surely I dream! Can it be possible that this paper, overflowing with the "rankest heresy," is published and openly sold under the very noses of the worshippers of "Our Lady of Guadalupe?" Miramon, Marquez, and thou, poor deluded, weak-minded Maximilian—of what avail were the torrents of blood ye caused to be shed, and your own tragic ends, in the attempt to drive back the champions of progress! The bulwarks of "the faith" have been thrown

down. Liberty of cults *has* come, and that with a vengeance. Warring, in words, among themselves on points of their own beliefs, these schismatics dispute the authority of "Holy Church," make light of "His Holiness the Pope," adversely criticise the evidence of "los miraglos," ridicule the "Invocation of the Queen of Heaven" and the mediation of the Saints, and insult the venerated effigies in the cathedrals and churches! *La Luz* is owned by the Baptists, and I read of the chapels, mission-houses, schools, and hospitals they have built and established, and also of the great progress they have made in their proselytism. Other competing churches do not, however, seem to regard that success with pleasure, the organ of the Episcopal Methodists, *El Evangelista Mexicano*, for instance, imputing to the Baptists a belief that the latter deny they hold. But the advertisements in these papers afford to me the most convincing evidence of the vast change in the condition of the republic since my residence there. "Only five days from Mexico to New York. Go by the NATIONAL railroad, *via* Lareda, the shortest and most picturesque route." "Have you read of the luxury of travel, *via* the M. K. & T. Railway? Buy your ticket and try it." Only *five* days to New York! It took me nearly three months to travel from Guanajuato to that city—but, of course, I did not rush on night and day, but made a few days' halt at each place of special interest. Thanks to the introduction of the "steam-horse," chronic revolution is now a thing of the past, and brigandage a vastly rarer feature of Mexican life. No longer are millions of hard dollars kept locked up in the interior for a year, and even two years, on account of a danger of the *conducta* being overpowered on its way to the port; nor is a full battalion of infantry and a squadron or more of lancers now necessary to escort the coin to the coast. Animal power is also in other ways

being largely superseded by the steam engine. In my time the cost of dragging heavy machinery from the coast to the mines was quite as much as, and in some cases greatly more than, its invoice value, plus the freight to Vera Cruz. Coal has at last been discovered in some parts of the country, and blast furnaces are already at work reducing the ores of the baser metals. At none but the smallest or most remote silver mines will the primitive bull's-hide sacks, lowered and raised by wooden machinery turned by mules or oxen, long continue to occupy an hour in doing what a steam pump would accomplish in two or three minutes. In fact, the cost of silver mining, reduction of the ore, and of transit of the metal has been lessened enormously, especially wherever a trunk line has been built to connect the mines with the central railway system. The famous mines of Sonora and Chihuahua have yet to be reached by rail and worked by modern appliances. When that is done, a very short time will suffice to show how unsound would be any international agreement fixing a permanent ratio of value between silver and gold. In proof of that, I would adduce the mining records of Batopilos (Sonora), where, as in others of the Northern States of Mexico, the veins crop out, and are often plainly visible on the surface. From "El Carmen"—one of several great mines at Batopilos—a block of pure silver weighing 425lbs. was obtained. North of Batopilos, and in the same State, is "Arazuma," said to be the richest mine in the world. Duty was paid to the Spanish Government on one block of virgin silver, cut out of that mine, which weighed 275lbs. Later on other blocks, cut out of the same vein, are said to have aggregated 4,300lbs., one of them weighing no less than 2,700lbs. The latter was claimed as belonging to the King, on the ground that it was the largest piece of pure silver

ever recorded, and hence a great national curiosity. Ultimately the district was declared to be the exclusive property of the Government, the place being pronounced to be "un creador de plata," i.e., "a producer of silver," as though Nature had there a laboratory for the transmutation of metals. When the Spaniards were driven out of the country, the Apáché Indians over-ran Sonora, Chihuahua, and the neighbouring States, and the mining industry in that region was virtually abandoned. The vast mineral wealth of those States has not, however, been forgotten, and it will soon be turned to account. Few places in the Republic have undergone as great a change as Tampico. Until within the past four or five years, even the best road to the interior—that *viâ* San Luis Potosí—was little more than a bridle-path, almost impassable during the rainy season, and extremely toilsome, and in many places dangerous, in its way over the mountains. Now there are two competing railways running from the port to the main lines, thus giving the Tampiqueños quick communication with the chief towns of the Republic, and also with the United States. But the greatest impulse to the growth of Tampico was effected during last year by the completion of the jetties at the mouth of the River Pánuco. Prior to that achievement the average depth of water on the much-dreaded bar was only about 7 feet. The immediate result was a depth of water of about 17 feet, and I am informed by the Manager of the West India and Pacific Steamship Company that 17ft. 6in. is now the normal depth. Several of the steamers of that company—notably the "Darien," and the "Louisianian," of 3,362 and 3,642 tons—have already ascended the river and discharged their cargoes at the wharf immediately in front of the custom house, which is in the centre of the town. In my time no larger vessel than a barque of some 700 or 800 tons burden could cross

the bar, and in stormy weather passengers could not land, and had to be carried back to Vera Cruz. The silver coined at San Luis Potosí can now reach Tampico in a few hours, instead of eight or ten days, while ores and argentiferous lead, the latter in considerable quantities, now help to swell the growth of the exports.

I have travelled in many climes, but there is none that I so ardently long to revisit as the "Bright land of Anàhuac." Still I feel that disappointment would await me. The comfort of a Pullman car and the luxury of a well-appointed hotel might better suit my years. But the excitement and romance of horseback travel, the ability to linger and survey at leisure the incomparable beauties and grandeur of the works of Nature, the hearty welcome of priest and alcalde at the primitive Indian villages, and the merry clatter of the horses' hoofs, and the jingle of steel on entering the paved plaza of some mountain pueblo, often to the alarm, but subsequent pleasure of the inhabitants—all that is over for such as I. Coal is fast replacing wood as fuel, and the smoke of factories, furnaces, and locomotives is now polluting the erstwhile transparent atmosphere, and blackening the trees and shrubs where stood Sir Arthur Helps' purely ideal "Venice of the Western World—the greatest of the wondrous cities of that mighty plain." Wholly visionary as the traditional descriptions of Tenochtitlan—the Aztec capital—undoubtedly are, the grandeur of the existing city of Mexico, and, still more, the sublime beauty of the scenery by which it is surrounded, never fail to evoke from the traveller exclamations of wonder and delight. Pity 'tis that so fair a spot—one might almost say "Nature's masterpiece"—is doomed to be blurred and disfigured, like modern Venice and most of the once lovely rural towns in this busy country of ours, by the evils attending the textile and smelting industries.



THE "CARAVELS" OF COLUMBUS.

BY E. E. MINTON.

NOTWITHSTANDING the amount of historical and archæological research called forth by the celebrations of the Fourth Centenary of the Discovery of America, one point still remains in more or less obscurity, viz., the actual appearance of the three small sailing vessels, described as "caravels," in which Columbus sailed from Palos. From the vague generalities indulged in by the successive biographers and historians on the subject, owing partly to lack of sympathy with the study of maritime archæology, and partly to the meagreness of materials for that study, it has evidently been regarded as a matter on which nothing reliable could be known. And that, therefore, the build, rig, and actual appearance of those sailing vessels which were the favourites of practical seamen, like Columbus, Magelhaens, Sebastian Cabot, and Vasco Da Gama, may be left to the imagination of the artist, who naturally selects from the more numerous representations of the tall and stately shipping of a century later.

We have this past year had a wealth of illustration in magazines and journals on the Columbus-Fourth-Centenary, drawn from every available source, but, on the whole, the tendency has been to refer to examples of a

later date—in many instances a full century and more—than the period in question, by which the fact is ignored that it was the long voyages inaugurated by the discoveries at the close of the fifteenth century which developed the great galleons of Drake's days, those handsome, yet crank and unwieldy vessels, possessing many dangerous qualities, from which the more buoyant caravel—small as she was—was free.

All the old stock phrases—vague, misleading, and indefinite—have been repeated, from "frail barks" of Washington Irving to the "vessels not larger than the two schooner yachts which lately raced across the Atlantic" of Sir Arthur Helps: the schooners of which he speaks being three times the tonnage of the largest of Columbus's vessels.

And where the picturing of the vessels has been delegated to the artist, to assist the imagination of the reader, he is still more bewildered, for he is offered a number of delineations of shipping of any and every period between the tenth and the seventeenth centuries, on the principle that "you pays your money and you takes your choice."

However, a source from which it is possible to reconstruct the type of ship in which Columbus made that voyage of never-fading interest does exist beyond question. And it is not that this source has been neglected altogether, but when crowded among other illustrations of little value, historically speaking, its importance has been overlooked.

We refer to the pen drawings in the "*Epistola Christopher Columbi*," preserved at Milan, which are attributed to Columbus himself by all authorities. Even if not by the hand of Columbus, they are of pre-eminent importance, being the work of a contemporary and intended to be in illustration of the letters.

One of these drawings gives a stern view of a caravel, not improbably the "Santa Maria" herself; another, the side view of a smaller vessel, perhaps the "Pinta" or the "Nina," that trusty little craft of 50 tons, which we find making several voyages to America after the first memorable one. A fac-simile of these drawings is given in Lacroix's "Arts of the Middle Ages."

What gives additional value to these drawings as illustrations is, that they are manifestly executed by one who was thoroughly familiar with certain ships from the way in which he has inserted in a comparatively rude though vigorous pen drawing, details which would only be present to the mind of a man practically acquainted with them, such as the blocks and their tackling, the spliced yards, the hoops round the mainmast at intervals to strengthen it, the seams in the sails, the ports open, etc., etc. Just such details as the mediæval artist, other than one who was also a sailor, drawing decoratively or heraldically, would have omitted.

One of the errors in the illustrations of the various histories, repeated again and again in the "Fourth Centenary" literature of the year, is in the erroneous estimate of the size of the caravels.

Now we know that of the three the "Santa Maria" was 70 tons, the "Pinta" 60 or 65, and the "Nina" 50 tons. No caravel ever exceeded 100 tons. In a later voyage, when larger ships were being sent out, Columbus complains of the size of his ship as being nearly 100 tons. If then we take an ordinary coasting schooner of 50 to 70 tons, take off the deck in the middle, raise a substantially built poop over a large cabin in the stern, build up the prow over the forecastle till it finishes in a small platform even higher than the poop, then with the bluff bows and full lines of the stern of the modern craft we shall not be

very far from a correct idea of the Fifteenth Century caravel. About the middle of the ship rises the mainmast, sometimes called "the mast," so much the larger and the most important is it of the three. It is stoutly made, and derives additional strength from the number of strong ropes reaching from under the round maintop to the bulwarks on either side, which strength is required to enable it to sustain the enormous mainsail with its massive yard on which the mediæval ship chiefly relied. The fore and mizen masts were much smaller; a small square sail ballooned from the former, whilst a lateen sail on the latter was a most valuable aid in beating up to windward. The circular maintop has a clumsy look to our eyes, but was probably lightly constructed. This is called the "round house" in Washington Irving's narrative.

How historically inaccurate then are the pictures of one of our most popular marine painters, in which the caravels of Magelhaens are represented like ships of 600 or 700 tons, and with the sails and rigging of the Seventeenth Century!

Again, all illustrations giving topmasts and topsails to the caravel are entirely misleading. The pen drawings in the "*Epistola C. Columbi*" show the mainsail drawn up close to the maintop, and no signs of topmast or means of carrying the smallest of topsails.

A century later Sir Walter Raleigh speaks of topmasts and topsails as amongst the improvements in the rigging of ships which had taken place *in his day*.

There was, no doubt, considerable variety in build of the caravel, and one would differ from another much more than our coasting brigs and schooners differ from one another. But they were always undecked in the waist, and this seems to have been the chief difference between a "ship" and a "caravel," this distinction being

repeatedly made by the old writers. What made the caravel so much a favourite with the brave adventurers of those times was its convenient size for exploring purposes, its handiness, what sailors would call its "weatherliness," as compared with other and larger vessels.

Studying carefully the accounts of their long voyages over utterly unknown oceans, silent as they are on so many points of which we would gladly know more, reading between the lines, as it were, we realise that the caravel possessed many valuable qualities—qualities which were lacking in the "tall and crank" "Great Harrys" and "Grace à Dieu" of the sixteenth century, qualities lacking sometimes in the long iron tanks to which modern ship-building has come—and one of these qualities was buoyancy. It was the possession of that quality, at least, which enabled the "Nina" to survive the tempests which assailed her on the homeward voyage in the February and March of 1493. For fifteen days and nights the "Nina" was the sport of an Atlantic gale, in which Columbus and his whole company gave themselves up for lost. In the eyes of a Cowes yachtsman their sailing qualities would have appeared miserable enough, but of the advantage of the broad beam, high bows and poop in securing good floating qualities in heavy seas there can hardly be question. The waist might be flooded by the waves, but the high-built cabins at the prow and stern must have had the same effect as the water-tight compartments at the prow and stern of a modern lifeboat, and enabled the caravel to struggle up from the danger of foundering, to which, as a partially decked craft, she would have appeared to be most liable.

We cannot read the account of the voyage homewards by Columbus in the smallest of the three caravels without feeling convinced of the existence of certain qualities in

these vessels which were some compensation for other defects in their construction.

Ships so built could hardly be pooped by a sea curling over the stern and sweeping the decks, as in the low built brig or schooner of later days. The great height of the bows, absurd as it appears to us, also saved the caravel from the danger to which the low prowed ship is exposed, that of being forced down, bows under.

No other vessel, in the history of the sea, can ever compare with the caravel of the fifteenth century, for romantic interest.

With the opening up of the great lines of trade with the Americas and the East Indies, the galleon of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is developed, probably from the Venetian carrack, but the glory of that immortal voyage to the West in the autumn of 1492, of the path to India by the Cape, of the first circumnavigation of the globe, surrounds the caravel.

For it was the caravel *Vittoria*, the sole survivor of the six vessels which sailed under the command of the ill-fated Magelhaens, which was the first to sail quite round the world—the *Vittoria*, whose battered and worm-gnawed hull her crew just managed to run ashore on the coast of Spain in time to prevent her sinking in sight of home, themselves worn out with their three years' Odyssey of peril and suffering.

To the end of time the caravel looms through the mists of the past as—

"The first that ever burst,
Into those silent seas."

We see a caravel, with Sebastian Cabot on board, among the ice of Behring's Straits, in the fogs off Newfoundland with Cortereal, in the tornado in the Carib Sea, Columbus reading Mark's Gospel on her poop, doubling the Cape of

Storms with Vasco Da Gama, shipping slaves on the coast of Benin, searching for gold and pearls in the West Indies, or bearing Pizarro, Cortez, and many other remorseless scourges, to destroy the empires of Mexico and Peru. Always the caravel, fast-sailing, light of draught, for piracy or for discovery and adventure.

Her bluff bows have tossed aside the spray that bites with icy chill among the Arctic seas, and have pushed slowly through the green weed of the sluggish Sargasso Sea.

That heavy mainsail of hers has been frozen to the yard, off Iceland, and has swelled before the scent-laden breezes of tropical islands. To sum up then: (1) The greatest achievements in the history of maritime discovery having been accomplished in those small sailing vessels at the close of the middle ages, known as the caravels, we consider that truthful representations of those vessels might reasonably have been expected in the illustrations called forth by the Fourth Centenary Celebrations; (2) that the inaccuracy and uncertainty of the illustrating artist is inexcusable from an archæological point of view, seeing that an extremely valuable authority remains to us in the above-mentioned drawings in the *Epistola C. Columbi*.





SUMMER IDLENESS IN SORRENTO.

BY C. E. TYRER.

TO escape from the stifling air of Naples, from its narrow dusky alleys with their unsavoury human swarm, and from the ceaseless and impudent importunities of car drivers, boatmen, street vendors, and beggars, and find oneself among the orange and lemon groves of Sorrento, is to make a delicious escape and enjoy a delicious experience. Beautiful, exceedingly, is the long drive from Castellamare, and when the last promontory is rounded, and the traveller sees before him the famous Piano di Sorrento, with its peaceful villages nestling among dark green groves where the golden fruit hangs so fairly and so fragrantly, and beyond them the blue gleam of the sea, he is almost tempted to exclaim—

Oh, if there's peace to be found in the world,
A heart that is humble might hope for it here.

This house of Cocumella, where I have domiciled myself, is completely surrounded by plantations of those beautiful fruits from the exportation of which the Sorrentini derive so much of their livelihood. It was a college of the Jesuits till about the middle of the last century: it was then bought by the great Farnese family, and finally, in 1777, came into the hands of the

great grandfather of the present proprietor, a Neapolitan of Greek descent. In 1821 it became an inn, the oldest in Sorrento, and since then has sheltered many distinguished travellers of our own and other races. Marion Crawford has, I am informed, described the place in his novel of "To Leeward," and he himself has his present summer abode hard by, close to a former monastery of the Capuchins. The house, with its coating of pink stucco, its pretty courtyard (where an ancient well supplies its guests with clear, cold spring water), and its many balconies and terraces, is a very bright and pleasant abode, and still preserves a certain air of cloistral calm and seclusion. In the domed and turreted church, whose architecture is in the usual vile taste of the later Renaissance, where the usual indifferent altar-pieces greet the eye, and very uninspiring portraits of Loyola and St. Francis Xavier confront one another at the entrance, the *Vicario* still comes down from Sorrento to read early mass on Sunday mornings. The dining-room is adorned with many frescoes, illustrating at great length, *more italiano*, the various pleasures of the table; along the blue of the ceiling swallows are for ever chasing butterflies in vain, while above the cornice two rather sad-looking boy angels are, apparently, kissing their hands to one another from opposite walls. From the terraces the blue waters of the bay ever flash and scintillate beyond the twinkling green of the lower foliage, and some majestic, isolated stone-pines that raise their heads aloft into the Italian heaven; and beyond those blue, blue waters are Ischia, Procida, and a long line of broken coast stretching past gay Parthenope to the beautiful purple pyramid of Vesuvius, with the white houses of Torre del Greco and Torre Annunziata glittering on either side of its base. Behind

the house a path conducts to a beautiful sandy beach, walled in by low grey cliffs, which are penetrated by the lofty, far-reaching caves, to be found almost everywhere in the volcanic rock of the coast. The beautiful pale-green maidenhair fern, so abundant in the district, plumes the rock in shady places, and many wild flowers, crimson and yellow, with the pungent perfumes of seaside blossoms, hang down their heads from the cliff walls in Nature's unstudied grace.

What do people do at Sorrento in these hot days of early summer? They lounge, they bathe, they boat; not that many of them indulge in so violent a form of exercise as rowing, preferring to be rowed about leisurely by sturdy native hands and arms. A lounge in the piazza nearly always affords entertainment. The statue of Sorrento's most illustrious son, Torquato Tasso, generally surveys a motley crew of car-drivers, mariners, and other sons of the soil, enjoying the *dolce far niente*, yet ever on the look-out for a job, and by no means bashful in asserting their claims on the stranger's notice. But to study the life and bearing of the mariner we must go down to the Marina, to which a steep stony path descends down one of the two ravines which bound Sorrento proper to the east and west. The summit and sides of the cliff walls are gay with golden broom; as you descend you notice a flourishing lemon grove deep down in the gap; there are various shrines to the patron saints of mariners, and to Mary, Star of the Sea; and just above the sandy beach are a number of fishermen's cottages and storehouses, clinging mostly to the sides of the rock. There Tonino will meet you with his most engaging smile and his unfailing, "Barca, signore?" but you know, alas! that in spite of his handsome face and his fine manners, he would derive the greatest satisfaction from cheating you, and

would do it with the utmost good humour and politeness. Still, almost all people with any poetry in their natures have a certain amount of sympathy with the children of the deep; and these mariners of the Sorrentine Peninsula are among the most picturesque of their kind. They wear mostly bright-coloured shirts, with gay sashes round the waist; and their heads, especially those of the elder men, are often covered with a peculiar red or brown woollen *beretta*, with the peak hanging down on one side. This, the characteristic headgear of the boatmen of the Neapolitan territory, seems, however, gradually giving place to other fashions, such as the favourite Tam o' Shanter.

One day I struggled up in the midday heat to the Deserto, a huge pink building which crowns one of the hills above Sorrento, now transformed from a monastery into an orphanage and asylum for the aged, superintended by a few brothers of the third order of St. Francis. At Priora a swarm of children rushed after me, all clamorous for *soldi*, and anxious to show the way; but from these I was delivered by a good-looking young fellow who said he was going my way, and would guide me to the Deserto. At first, in the simplicity of my heart, I thought he had joined me for the pleasure of my company: but when we had at length reached the door of the monastery (he had entertained me by the way with stories of the attempts of the natives to swindle strangers) it appeared he could be satisfied with nothing short of a *mezza bottiglia*. The mild-eyed but shrewd-looking *frate* who appeared conducted me to the guest room, a beautiful many-windowed room from which the view of the two bays of Capri, and of the village-dotted hills of the extremity of the peninsula, is one of the loveliest on which the eye of man can rest. He presently brought me a bottle of wine, and, when I praised

it, he added with some pride that it was from their own *vigna*. He informed me that very little pure natural wine is drunk in Naples, the merchants there generally mixing a little good wine with much of a cheap inferior quality.

Full of beauty and charm as are all hours of the day in this delightful retreat, its choicest moment, perhaps, is the sunset hour. You have returned, say, from a late afternoon stroll through the narrow lanes of the Piano, and caught a glimpse of some picturesque courtyard with trellised vines tossing in the breeze against the deep Italian blue, and noticed the many armorial bearings over the doorways (often with two sculptured roses at the side), which suggest a much wealthier population than the present one. In groves where the fruit has not been plucked one may still see amid the dark green foliage "the orange lift its golden moons," and by this time the peasants will be lighting the lamps before the many shrines of the Madonna. A deep hush has passed over the face of Nature, and when you repair to the terrace to watch the sunset, a long line of quivering gold stretches along the waters from the burning west. Soon the sun sinks, at this season a little to the left of Cape Misero; the western clouds turn to a deep and deeper orange, and the low land of Procida and the lofty crags of peaked Ischia are suffused with a soft purple glow. On the other hand, as you follow the outline of the bay, your eye will rest on Vesuvius, still smoking, as one may say, his slow meditative pipe, and brooding apparently on the vast possibilities of mischief locked within his bosom. To the extreme right are the still loftier mountains behind Castellamare, whose culminating peak, Monte St. Angelo, gives a touch of almost savage grandeur to the scene. At their base the lights begin to twinkle in the villages of the Piano, and the gathering dusk lends an added element of romance to

a landscape dear to the cultured English traveller as the scene of Browning's "Englishman in Italy." Then, after dinner, the fireflies will have lit their little lamps in the fragrant dusk, and be gliding about the tree-shaded lanes like tiny embodied spirits of fire. Venus, as seen from the terrace, casts a broad shaft of silver light across the bay, and the waxing moon lends every evening a deeper and deeper enchantment to the prospect, paling the gathering brilliance of the stars. And so to bed, and to a sleep unbroken, save, perchance, in the early morning hours, by the hoarse croak of the peacock, which roosts on one of the trees of the Russian villa adjacent. And when at length one awakens and looks out of window, there is another blue and golden day, which will pass in all its main features like the previous one, till the moon and "the same bright patient stars" once more arise in the magic of their beauty, and their power of awakening more solemn thoughts than quite accord with such an idle life as this.





ON LAUGHTER.

BY WILLIAM I. WILD.

THE saying, "Laugh and grow fat," has become so universal as to have passed into a proverb; yet, like many other proverbs, there is a debatable atmosphere about it, whilst due consideration scarcely bears out the fundamental principle laid down. Whether it is intended to convey the idea that the man who can laugh is more likely to have dismissed from his mind the worries and cares of life, and by so doing, driven away the forces which go far towards making men thin and anxious-looking, or whether it is a fact that good humour is in itself an elemental possession of obesity is an open question. Yet it is not always, even in fiction, that fatness and laughter are united; two more typical cases cannot be quoted than in Charles Dickens's "Barnaby Rudge." Old John Willett, at the Maypole, is a stolid fat man, whose smiles are rare as angels' visits, whilst Gabriel Varden, the locksmith, is the very essence and embodiment of good-humoured laughter. In Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar," Act I., Scene 2, we find that potentate desiring: "Let me have men about me that are fat, sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights." Only one thought suggests itself—the

great Cæsar is supposed to imagine that men of corpulent and sleepy habit were less disposed to the hatching of sedition than their leaner and hungrier-looking brethren.

Strange it is that from a serious poet like Milton should come the pithiest and most complete description of laughter that has ever been written. In "L'Allegro" we read—

Haste thee, nymph, to bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity ;
Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks, and wreathèd smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live on dimple sleek ;
Sport that wrinkled care derides,
And laughter holding both his sides ;
Come and trip it as you go,
On the light fantastic toe.

In Cowper's "Table Talk" the serious Briton is compared with his Continental neighbour—

The Frenchman, easy, debonair, and brisk,
Give him his lase, his fiddle, and his friek,
Is always happy, reign whoever may,
And laughs the sense of mis'ry far away.

Amid all his wisdom, Solomon seems to have written in various terms on laughter—

A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance,
A merry heart doeth good like a medicine,

are maxims found in The Proverbs ; yet in the later years of his life, when it is reasonable to suppose the wise man had exhausted the pleasures of the world, we read in Ecclesiastes—

Sorrow is better than laughter ; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.

In this latter spirit must have been George Herbert when he wrote in the Temple Church porch—

Laugh not too much, the wittie man laughs least,
 For wit is newes only to ignorance.
 Lasse at thine own things laugh, lest in the jest
 The person share, and the conceit advance.

The sage of Chelsea is not considered an advocate of merriment, but in "Sartor Resartus," Book I, we read this of Teufelsdröckh: "Here, however, we gladly recall to our mind that once we saw him laugh; once only, perhaps 'twas the first and last time in his life, but then such a peal of laughter, enough to have awakened the Seven Sleepers—no man who has once heartily and wholly laughed can be altogether irreclaimably bad. How much lies in laughter? the cipher key, wherewith we decipher the whole man! Some men wear an everlasting barren simper, in the smile of others lies a cold glitter as of ice; the fewest are able to laugh what can be called laughing, but only sniff and snigger and titter from the throat outwards, or at best produce some whiffling husky cachinnation, as if they were laughing through wool; of none such comes good. The man who cannot laugh is only fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils: but his whole life is already a treason and a stratagem."

There may be many kinds of laughter, it is true—the laugh of derision, or the laugh of an exultant enemy, are neither of them cachinnations pleasant to hear. Of such a nature is the laughter spoken of by Hamlet in Act V., when at the graveside he points to the mouldering skulls and exhorts the Clown: "Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that."

Laugh and be fat, sir, your penance is known,
 They that love mirth, let them heartily drink,
 'Tis the only receipt to make sorrow sink,

says rare Ben Jonson in the Penates, whilst as a reproduction of Solomon's advice, Young, in his "Night

Thoughts," says, "The house of laughter makes a house of woe." The metaphors of laughter in Shakespeare are abundant, and show the estimation in which this source of enjoyment stood in the poet's mind. In "Cymbeline," Act I., Scene 7, occurs the line—

With his eyes in flood with laughter.

In "Love's Labour Lost," Act V., sc. 2: "I am stabb'd with laughter," and "O! you shall see him laugh till his face be like a wet cloak ill laid up," is in Henry IV. Othello says, "So, so, they laugh that win," when goaded to madness by the taunts and sneers of Iago; and in Henry IV., Part 2, Act I., "The brain of this foolish compounded clay man is not able to invent anything that tends to laughter, more than I invent, or is invented on me." In his "Defence of Poesy," Sir Philip Sidney says—"Laughter almost ever cometh of things disproportioned to ourselves and Nature; delight hath a joy in it either permanent or present, laughter hath only a scornful tickling."

There is so much in laughter itself that is contagious that it is small wonder if the witty sayings of a man survive him long after any of his wise or serious utterances have died. "We must laugh before we are happy for fear we die before we laugh at all," says Bruyère, and the saying is true enough in the main. Men may laugh loudly and yet have within their breast a sorrowful heart; but those who are the happiest are easily moved to laughter, because their mental condition is such that they desire to see others as merry as themselves.

In his two poems, "The Prologue to Satire," and "The Epilogue to Satire," Pope is full of contradictions in regard to laughter. In the former he says—

To laugh were want of goodness and of grace,
And to be grave exceeds our pow'r of face;

whilst the very recklessness of mirth is expressed in the couplet from the "Epilogue"—

Laugh at your friends, and if your friends are sore
So much the better, you may laugh the more.

The dominant power of laughter is shown in all our social life. The cheery friend who can enliven the family circle with his ebullition of humour is ever the most welcome guest. The serious or studious man may have within him far more of the qualities which can improve or elevate; but the mind seeks in innocent mirth some solace for the worries and cares of life. The new comedy, the lively farce, or the drama which has in it the largest amount of the laughable element—these attractions are sufficient to draw crowded houses, whilst pieces of greater merit and more solid worth are financial failures. The world loves to be amused, and although often enough its smiles and laughter are evoked by trifles light as air, there is no limit to the longing which is ever insatiable and unfilled. It is natural to sympathise with a friend or acquaintance on whose countenance is expressed the emotion of a great sorrow or trouble; yet condole with him as we may, we cannot perhaps weep with him, because the sorrow is his alone and not ours. Far otherwise is it with laughter. The smile on the face of a friend or acquaintance, or the hearing of his hearty laughter provokes mirth within us, and instinctively we laugh in sympathy, although the joke, or the occasion for such mirth, may be to us an unknown quantity.

In his usual concise manner Carlyle fairly sums up the characteristics of laughter, when he says:—"How much lies in laughter, the cipher key by which we decipher the whole man;" for the sound of a man's laughter has often enough in it, that which gives you a true idea of his character, his manliness, falseness, or sincerity. The man

who is always laughing, whose inane and silly mirth jars on the ear, may be loud in his professions of regard; but experience will prove that he is as false and hollow as the mirth he so frequently displays. The loud resonant laughter of the vulgar boasting fellow proclaims him at once for what he is—a man careless and unthinking of the feelings or comfort of others, but wrapt up exclusively in his own enjoyment. There is in the laughter of some other men a sound that makes the flesh creep upon the bones; it is so sardonic, so sarcastic, that it awakens instant wonder in the breast of the listener, as to what special weakness of ours has provoked such an unwonted display of wondrous and fearful mirth.

The heartiness with which some men laugh is typical of their nature—a nature which, as a rule, does nothing by halves—enjoying mirth with just as much earnestness as is shown by the same man when the serious business of life has to be engaged in. In others, the ebullition of laughter is an accident; perhaps the mirth-provoking incident may have suddenly and unexpectedly arisen, or the witty remark have taken them by surprise; but in every such case the momentary weakness passes like a spasm over the face, and the countenance falls back into its icy sternness, with an added expression of resentment for the weakness displayed.

In the experience of most of us, the desire to laugh has come upon us, with almost uncontrollable force, at the most inopportune and incongruous times, when face to face with the most sorrowful circumstances; or in moments when a serious crisis in their lives was in abeyance men and women have been shaken by spasms of internal laughter, alike unaccountable and unexpected. It almost seems as if the highly strung nervous system finds thus some method of relief, and vents itself

either in a flood of tears or in the laughter we must at all costs suppress. To laugh gracefully, if we must laugh naturally, is an impossibility; true mirth and enjoyable laughter can only be indulged in when the very subject of our joy has made us for once forget self for the moment, and lose our identity in the pleasure of the hour. Whilst we can share in the mirth which causes us to laugh at or with others, it is of all things on earth the most galling to find ourselves the subject of the laughter of our friends. To laugh at a thing is wide as the poles asunder from being laughed at ourselves; few men can recall with equanimity the trying period in their existence when personally they were the cause of scornful mirth or hearty laughter by others.

The following analysis of "laughter" has been given:—Those who laugh with an *a* are sincere, open, frank, turbulent; those who laugh with an *e* are phlegmatic and melancholic; those who laugh with an *o* are frank and generous; and those who laugh with a *u* are grumbling and misanthropic. Perhaps this is so, but those who have not been disappointed in love, or who may have shaken off dyspepsia, can experiment upon themselves. In the *Spectator* for Saturday, May 17th, 1712, Addison has a homily on Mirth, as true and sterling in its sentiments as anything in English literature.

"I have always preferred cheerfulness to mirth. The latter I consider as an act, the former as a habit of the mind. Mirth is short and transient, cheerfulness fixed and permanent. Those are often raised into the greatest transports of mirth who are subject to the greatest depressions of melancholy. On the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind such an exquisite gladness, prevents us from falling into any depths of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of lightning, that breaks through

a gloom of clouds, and glitters for a moment ; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of daylight in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity. Men of austere principles look upon mirth as too wanton and dissolute for a state of probation, and as filled with a certain triumph and insolence of heart that is inconsistent with a life which is every moment obnoxious to the greatest dangers. Writers of this complexion have observed that the sacred person who was the great pattern of perfection was never seen to laugh. Cheerfulness of mind is not liable to any of these exceptions. A cheerful mind is not only disposed to be affable and obliging, but raises the same good humour in those who come within its influence. A man finds himself pleased, he does not know why, with the cheerfulness of his companion—it is like a sudden sunshine, that awakens a secret delight in the mind without her attending to it."

The world has in it so much that is tragic and sorrowful, so much that tries the heart and bears down our hopes and affections as though they were but cobwebs, spun in the night to be destroyed at dawn, that we do well to encourage and foster the mirth which is honest and true—the mirth which has in it no taint of malice towards others, but seeks to enliven and amuse, and which has for its only aim the delights of social intercourse, of healthy enjoyment, and a relief to the many cares which crowd unbidden round us day by day.





THE LIBRARY TABLE.

Nugæ, being Selections from many years' Scribblings in Verse. By ABRAHAM STANSFIELD. Manchester, 1892.

It were indeed ungrateful almost to churlishness, and would make apparent how little of that true inwardness of knowledge which the passing years are supposed to bring had clung to us, were we to make light of that wise provision of Nature which ensures that all young men shall be poets. We ought to be for ever grateful that for at least once in our lives our souls are attuned to the soul of Nature, and that we can worship at her shrine, knowing that we also are of the gods. And though many of us may feel this divine afflatus, this power which we choose to call poetry, but as a vague yet wonderful and beautiful enlightenment, and may never attempt to do that which it prompts us to do, namely, make known our great discovery in song; yet the glamour of it has been ours, and we shall remember it now and then with regret, however hard and cynical the struggle with the world may, in after time, have made us. How much happier then are those to whom has been added the gift of expressing in verse that which the uplifting of the veil has enabled them to see and feel. They become "maakars," creators of something,

and this feeling, that they possess the power of creation, raises them in the moment of exercising that power to the heights whereon sit the immortals. It is not material to them how that which they produce will compare with the poetry of the great singers. The matter of it, and the manner of it, are doubtless of the essence of the joy which they experience in production, but they are not the joy itself—that springs from the knowledge that they are exercising a gift which they feel to be divine. This is why the minor poet will be for ever with us, and why we should be very tender in our regard for him. But it is no reason why he should print his verses. For this gift of song, like all other bounties, is bestowed in greater and less degree. That which is great is indeed a priceless possession, and yet has been showered upon the world almost as unstintedly as the rain from heaven. The gods, knowing how goodly a thing it was, have given with both hands the gift which in its highest manifestation should be most potent to bring solace and enlightenment and delight to man. Therefore, there being so much of the very best poetry, that which is not of the greatest is superfluous, and if it be wilfully foisted upon humanity is almost an impertinence. But for him who has made it, and has had his joy in making it, provided he keep it for himself and his friends, there should be nothing but congratulation, for he has had a glimpse, however dim and however momentary it may have been, into the mysteries.

Mr. Stansfield cannot be deemed an offender, for he has printed his volume of verses, as he tells us in his preface, "for his friends." Moreover, he modestly accounts them, as his title signifies, but as trifles light as air. Yet that the production of these "trifles" has brought him many a delightful hour, there can be no doubt, for in the whole of them there is hardly a note of sadness. Though written in

many moods, a cheerful optimism pervades the volume, and gives it as sweet a savour as if it were scented with the author's favourite flower. What that flower may be, however, it were difficult to determine, for a multitudinous love for them is present in these verses, and many of the best lines are inspired by them.

One section of the volume indicates Mr. Stansfield's acquaintance with English literature. He has evidently widely and appreciatively read, and his "tributary lines" to several of our poets are not unworthy of their subjects. Here are some relative to Tennyson's "In Memoriam":—

. Nay, mighty master of all melody !
 This lofty lay of thine, it shall not die—
 Thou sweetest singer of the British choir
 Of noble singers ! While the sacred fire
 Of poesy shall burn in Britain, still
 The echo of thy lofty strains shall fill
 Her mountains and her valleys. Nay, when she
 Hath sunk ten fathom deep beneath the sea,
 Another world shall listen to thy song ;
 For, though the nations die, the muse is ever young !
 O blessed singer ! to thy voice have I
 Full often listened till its melody
 My soul hath ravished, and so utterly
 That, listening to it, almost I could die !
 So passing sweet those wondrous strains of thine—
 An earthly song in which the angels join.

Another section, almost the largest in the volume, contains translations from several continental poets. Many of these renderings, though few are strictly literal, clearly show that Mr. Stansfield possesses a considerable knowledge of the language from which he translates, and a delicate appreciation of the possibilities of English as a medium for paraphrase. Uhland seems to have appealed most strongly to his taste, possibly because the gloomy imagination of that poet presents so strong an antithesis to his own.

These renderings are decidedly the best work in the volume, doubtless because they have compelled the writer to concentrate his power of expression, and have supplied themes of deep and varied interest. The following translation of one of the few gems with which Baudelaire has enriched French poetry is as beautiful as its original:—

THE CRACKED BELL.

Oh, bitter, yet sweet, in the winter time,
While crackles the fire, to sit by the blaze,
And call up the memories of far-off days,
At the misty hour, when the church-bells chime.

Oh, happy church-bell, with a voice of power,
In spite of the years, he is ringing yet ;
As a watchman tried, he shall not forget,
When the time comes round, to call out the hour.

My soul is a bell that hath lost its tone ;
And when with its songs 'twould people the air,
And loosen the tongue of its wild despair,
What is it I mutter ?—a wordless moan,

Like the cry of a soldier that wounded lies
By a lake of blood, amid heaps of slain,
That striveth for speech, in uttermost pain,
But dumbly sinks down on the dead, and dies !



